

# Rotary News

INDIA  
[www.rotarynewsonline.org](http://www.rotarynewsonline.org)





# Flying high for a cause



**K**en Hutt of RC Berry, Australia, paraglides from Kala Patthar, a peak in Nepal with a view of the Everest summit, as part of his expedition to raise funds to end polio. "I'm not a doctor,

I can't treat kids for polio," Hutt told filmmaker Joe Carter, who has since produced a documentary about the endeavour. "But what I can do is help the cause in probably a bit of an unusual way."

He estimates to have raised more than \$200,000 for End Polio Now, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's 2:1 match.

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## A worthy school project

Glad to see schoolchildren, along with their principal, in a village school playground created by RC Bombay Worli as the cover photo of the Feb issue. This picture aptly depicts Rotary's commitment to service. The *Assembly Moments* photos on the front inner cover are excellent. RI President Jennifer Jones narrates well the importance of empowering girls by citing the life of refugees in the Nakivale settlements in Uganda.

The Editor's note explains well the environmental disaster that is unfolding in Joshimath by pointing out how such calamities can be prevented. RID Mahesh Kotbagi asks us to 'love the world around you' as Valentine's Day approaches, while RID AS Venkatesh very relevantly turns the spotlight on learning and training at all levels.

Foundation trustee chair Ian Riseley explains how Rotary promotes peace around the world. Kudos to RC Bombay Worli and the school principal Ravi Kajale for their dedication and hard work. Other articles like *Plea to Indian Rotarians....*, *Making Rotary irresistible*, *Indian laws need active citizenry*, *DGs have made India proud* and



*RID 3231 hosts a multidistrict meet* are all readworthy. Nice to read about Hemant, 'king of soft, seductive and caressing voice.' The Rotary theme for 2023-24, *Create hope in the world* is meaningful and apt to the present world order.

I was really sad to hear the news of the passing away of PRID Panduranga Setty whose commendable service will be remembered by Rotary. Condolences to all bereaved. Thank you, editorial team for your dedicated efforts in making *Rotary News* one of the best among its ilk.

Philip Mulappone MT  
RC Trivandrum  
Suburban — D 3211

Editor's in-depth study on each subject before penning it

down is praiseworthy as she tries her best to make the issue crystal clear and easy to understand. Her recent editorial on Joshimath, "an environmental disaster waiting to happen" is self-explanatory.

Hats off to RC Bombay Worli for transforming a tribal village spending crores of rupees. The uncanny efforts of the Rotarians deserve appreciation. The smiling faces of children and the principal depict the inner happiness. I am at a loss of words to convey my compliments to Editor Rasheeda Bhagat for having huge stamina for travelling and gathering all information in respect of various projects being undertaken by different clubs and presenting to us to have an update on Rotary activities across India.

Raj Kumar Kapoor  
RC Roopnagar — D 3080

The Feb cover, showing the newly-created playground by RC Bombay Worli in a Zugrewadi school, is commendable. There has been a complete transformation of the village, including the Adivasi school which has got a new building with a well-equipped

## Panduranga Setty remembered

While the news of PRID Panduranga Setty's demise saddened the Rotary world, it was highly saddening for us at RC Karur, for we share a special relationship with him. Back in 1997-98, when our club was a small one, we invited him to be the chief guest at the installation of our club officers for that year. Despite Karur

being far away from Bengaluru, he readily accepted our invitation. He and his wife not only attended the event, but also donated a drinking water facility complete with a pumping line, an overhead tank and delivery lines to a home for destitute children in Karur. To this day, whenever the warden of that home meets us, he recalls that project with gratitude.

There is an interesting anecdote to his visit as well. The train from Bengaluru arrives at Karur at 4.30am. We had gone to the Railway station to receive him but couldn't find him. What had happened was that Setty and his wife, having overslept, got down at Dindigul and took a cab to Karur from there. This travel and the project would have certainly cost him a tidy sum. A man with a big heart, he



library and laboratory. It was heartening to read that separate toilet blocks with running water for both girls and boys were also provided.

Kudos to the club and the school principal for their devotion in improving the living standards in the village and facilities for the tribal school.

*KMK Murthy  
RC Secunderabad — D 3150*

**R**I President Jones rightly says that empowering girls and women to realise their full potential will create new pathways for membership growth and will usher in lasting change for better communities.

The tireless efforts of members at RC Bombay Worli in lifting a tribal village are commendable. Thanks to their hard work, the village has now got an upgraded school with all facilities. Also, due credit should go to the school principal Ravi Kajale for his commitment to renovate the school despite hardships.

*S Muniandi  
RC Dindigul Fort — D 3000*

refused our request to bear his travel expenses and spent the money from his own pocket. As the then club president who was installed by him on that day, I feel both proud and sad to share this story.

*K Ravindrakumar  
RC Karur — D 3000*

The short but scintillating message titled *Learning and Training* by

RI director A S Venkatesh is a motivating piece for all Rotarians. Updating of training methodology, taking feedback, and continual improvement are essential factors for our progress. Thank you, sir for your words worth a million dollars.

Former Indian president Dr Abdul Kalam with whom I had interacted for the launch of a vehicle programme in ISRO for more than two decades used to tell us that “Learning without knowledge is learned ignorance”. We feel so sad when we find some of our district leaders use the Rotary forum to boost their image and develop their business.

*NRUK Kartha, RC Trivandrum  
Suburban — D 3211*

I was impressed by the Valentine’s Day message by RID Mahesh Kotbage titled *Love the world around you* in the Feb issue. I read it twice. He has inspired Rotarians to serve the communities we live in and those elsewhere.

We are proud of our top leadership who spread the message of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

*SK Sablok, RC Nahan  
Sirmour Hills — D 3080*

## An enjoyable read

Enjoyed reading the article *Gavaskar’s third innings* (Jan issue) after knowing about *Rotary News*. Please keep me on your active post list. Editor Rasheeda’s writings are readable as ever in this publication.

*Yoginder Diwan  
RC Parwanoo — D 3080*

## Good job by Rotaractors

Rotarians should be impressed by the action of Rotaractors who had organised a blood donation drive at the Visakha Vista institute. India has a young population and youth must be drawn to become Rotaractors. They will be the backbone of Rotary in the future as they have got the passion to take up noble projects while still in Rotaract clubs.

*TD Bhatia  
RC Mayur Vihar — D 3012*

## Rotary News Plus adds value

*Rotary News Plus* is a very good initiative to improve the public image of Rotary. Through this e-magazine our projects reach the masses. Many congratulations.

*Gajanan Mane  
RC Karad — D 3132*

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor: [rotarynews@rosaonline.org](mailto:rotarynews@rosaonline.org); [rushbhagat@gmail.com](mailto:rushbhagat@gmail.com). Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos, to [rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com).

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the Editor at [rushbhagat@gmail.com](mailto:rushbhagat@gmail.com) or [rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com).

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Click on **Rotary News Plus** on our website [www.rotarynewsonline.org](http://www.rotarynewsonline.org) to read about more Rotary projects.

**On the cover:** Rotaractors of RAC Chennai Central, RID 3232, teach children at a slum in Chennai, under the club’s *Bridge* project.

**Picture:** Kiran Zehra

# Lessons from the tea master



Genshitsu Sen, former grandmaster of the Urasenke tea tradition, performs a traditional Japanese tea ceremony for RI President Jennifer Jones during her trip to Japan in November. The tea ceremony, known as *chadō*, dates back centuries and embraces the arts, religion, philosophy and social life.

I will never forget the gift of meeting tea master Genshitsu Sen during my trip to Japan in November.

Not only is Sen the former grandmaster of the Urasenke tea tradition, but he is also an accomplished Rotarian. Those accomplishments include helping charter the RC Kyoto-South, Japan, serving as president of the RC Kyoto and governor of District 2650, and holding leadership roles in Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation.

It was an honour to spend time with him. He is a remarkable human being and a joyful soul. And his leadership and engagement in Rotary remain strong.

During that same week in Japan, I had the opportunity to record a video for a 100-year-old World War II naval hero and two-time Rotary district governor from Park City, Utah.

Sen and the Rotarian from Park City shared similar stories, though they served on opposing sides of the war. What was remarkable to me was that each of them chose Rotary to live lives of peace-making. It struck me that we are all on this planet simply trying to do our best, and we are much more similar than we are different.

I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to witness these stories and meet such incredible people.

**Jennifer Jones**  
President, Rotary International



Sen stands outside the Urasenke tearoom compound where he lives in Kyoto. *Rotary* magazine wrote about Sen's remarkable story in the August 2022 issue. You can listen to an audio version of the story at [rotary.org/peace-through-bowl-tea](https://rotary.org/peace-through-bowl-tea).

Photographs: (Ceremony) Kyoko Nozaki;  
(Portrait) Minmin WU



## When love defeats hate...

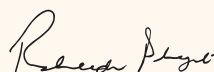
India, its social and cultural fabric, ethos, values... in short, its heartbeat, is much, much bigger than a film. But in more ways than one, the Bollywood blockbuster and Shahrukh Khan/Deepika Padukone starrer *Pathaan*, which just crossed the phenomenal ₹1,000-crore mark at the box office, as I write this edit, comes within a striking distance of making a decisive statement on how India and Indians think, feel and act. And also, because this analogy fits in nicely with Rotary's latest and most wonderful mantra DEI — Diversity, Equity, Inclusion.

We all know the brouhaha that erupted in the days preceding the film's release on the big screen, and the cacophony of hate voices that exploded on social media urging people to boycott this movie. The primary reason the hate brigade or the 'boycott gang,' as these voices were aptly described, was attacking *Pathaan* was because the protagonist is a Muslim. All kinds of his statements from the past were dug out, twisted, misquoted, and torn out of context to argue that he was anti-national. Next, the film's heroine, Deepika Padukone, who has in the past taken a bold and independent stand on some basic issues connected to freedom of thought and expression, was attacked for the colour of her bikini, and "exposing her body" during a song sequence in the film. While Khan was attacked by a popular Hindi journalist as a "cockroach with abs," Padukone was abused in language too filthy to be reproduced here. Isn't it infuriating to note, yet again, that it is always the woman for whom the most abusive and heinous treatment and language are reserved? And the magical Rotary credo to empower women gains even more focus vis-à-vis the special vulnerability of a woman because of her gender.

But in the midst of all this hate explosion, a most surprising, and absolutely delightful, thing happened. Almost all of India.... every region, nook and corner as it were, responded to this abominable hate campaign by just one action. Indians of all hues... religions, castes, class, speakers of different languages, thronged to the theatres to watch the movie. I know so many people who couldn't care less about how a movie does at the box office, checking every day how much the film had collected. One tweet said it all: 'Every day, I check *Pathaan*'s box office collection... as though the money is coming directly into my bank account!'

But it is not about the money. It is about people pouring out their love to say: Stop.... not in our name. It is about the vital essence of a country which is knit together so intricately, so beautifully, so delicately, by fine threads of a thousand vibrant colours to create a fabric which will not be destroyed so easily by hatemongers.

Also, two things helped. Through the whole storm, the mega star kept his mouth firmly shut, and had only one message at the Kolkata film festival — let's remain positive. But at the same forum, the veteran and highly respected superstar of Indian cinema, saluted Kolkata "for your artistic temperament that embraces the essence of plurality and equality," and urged both filmmakers and viewers to celebrate India's "diversity". Most important, a few days before the film's release, at a BJP forum, Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself urged his party leaders/ministers to refrain from commenting on films, and concentrate on the work they had been given — the task of development and nation building. Touché!

  
Rasheeda Bhagat

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Website



# Director

## Rotary's quick disaster response

Habitat for Humanity International are communicating with the district leaders in the region. Many Rotarians are asking how they can help.

Rotary extends relief through three phases. Immediate response where local clubs and partners offer helping hands and supplies; short-term assistance through funds and material to help communities re-establish day-to-day operations; and long-term rebuilding where clubs plan and implement projects to rebuild affected communities.

We can create a huge impact by donating online on [rotary.org](http://rotary.org) to Turkey/Syria Disaster Response Fund, Ukraine Response Fund and Pakistan Flood Response Fund. The Disaster Response Fund can accept cash contributions and District Designated Funds.

Promoting peace is by far the cornerstone of our global mission. Everything we do leads to creating an environment where peace can prevail, including supporting education, fighting disease and so on.

At the end I can only say, grief is love that can no longer be shared. Love that you wanted to give, but the person is no longer around to receive it. The feeling of loss remains. It doesn't shrink with time. So let's start loving and taking care of people from today.

**Mahesh Kotbagi**  
RI Director, 2021-23

In life we are continuously faced with all sorts of problems and we have to take the right decisions. I've noticed that I make better decisions when I ask myself the right questions. The results have made me a happier person. Whatever the situation, you can choose how you want to handle it efficiently. This is exactly what happened in three different disasters last year — in Ukraine, Pakistan, and now in Turkey and Syria.

Turkey and Syria were struck by two devastating earthquakes killing thousands, destroying homes, leaving the survivors in bitter and unrelenting winter cold. Add to this non-availability of clean water and washrooms, and there was dire need for tents and shelter kits, stoves, thermal blankets and clothes, and of course cash to buy food and fuel to survive the bitter cold.

The Rotary world responded to this catastrophe immediately. RI activated our disaster response efforts, communicated with the affected districts, and encouraged governors in those regions to apply for disaster response grants, etc. TRF decided that all donations made from now till March 31 to the Turkey/Syria Disaster Response Fund will be used for earthquake relief projects. It made available over \$125,000, through Disaster Response Grants, to the affected Rotary districts. Rotary's project partners ShelterBox and



## Change begins with you

Recently I was present at a training event where a very senior Rotary leader asked the members of the audience a seemingly simple, yet powerful question. He asked them if they would join the same club that they are in today, should they be prospective Rotarians now.

This question set me thinking as it did many among the participants. How often do we see something in another club that we wish was also done in our clubs. The nature of fellowship, a project that kindles passion, a fun activity, membership referral system.... However many of us do nothing beyond lamenting. Mahatma Gandhi has famously said, "Be the change you want to be!" This could well apply to us, Rotarians, as well.

There would always be some members who might have similar concerns, but in the absence of any visible change, may choose to be indifferent which leads to disenchantment and finally leaving the organisation. If we care for our club and our organisation, the least we can do is to be a champion of change in our own clubs. Let us begin with



making a list of things that we would want to see in our clubs, but aren't there presently. If each one of us does this exercise, we may have a large pool of ideas to sift through and with the collective wisdom of our members, we may be able to zero in on a set of changes that are most suitable and relevant for our clubs.

This also has the added advantage of greater buy-in from our stakeholders, thereby leading to ease in implementation. I urge each one of you to set the ball rolling. By the time this Rotary year ends, we should all be members of a club that satisfies our vision of a dynamic club that combines the best of all that is possible. As is often said, spectators make noise, players deliver! Let us stop being spectators and become active players in our clubs.

**AS Venkatesh**  
RI Director, 2021-23

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Magazine

## A precious resource inaccessible to many

Living in Australia, you think a lot about water. When you travel to the nation's vast interior, the Outback, you can't help but wonder how such an arid climate has supported life for millennia. There, each sip of water feels precious.

Each sip seems to get more precious by the day as climate change continues to impact water supply everywhere. Where Juliet and I live, on the temperate coast not far from Melbourne, I remember times not long ago when water supplies were so low that severe usage restrictions were put into place. We now live on rainwater that falls onto our roof and is collected in a tank. In many parts of the world, people don't have that luxury.

Water is essential for life no matter where we live. Yet many of us take it for granted. Think of all the times today you turned on the tap. About 1 in 4 people in the world have quite a different experience when they do — if they have a tap at all. Today, two billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water, according to the United Nations. It is heartbreaking that each year, about 300,000 children under age five die from diarrhoeal diseases caused by poor sanitation, poor hygiene, or unsafe drinking water — all preventable circumstances.

This is where Rotary comes in. Through your support, TRF provides water and sanitation for countless communities around the globe. Foundation global grants have ranged from providing toilets and hygiene education for villages in the Philippines to building infrastructure for year-round access to safe, affordable drinking water in Brazil.

The water and sanitation problems that we face are too great for any of us to solve alone. But whether we work with global grant partner districts across the world or with large agencies such as USAID, we are making a difference.

When thinking of teaming up to provide safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, remember that one of our greatest partners is right here within the family of Rotary: Rotaract.

Effective this Rotary year, Rotaract clubs may apply for global grants. I encourage Rotary and Rotaract clubs to work together on existing grants and for Rotary clubs to support grants sponsored by Rotaract clubs. Together, Rotary and Rotaract clubs are going to take the power of the Foundation to a new level. TRF has more potential than ever to make a difference in the water and sanitation challenges we all face, thanks to your generous support.

**Ian HS Riseley**  
Foundation Trustee Chair



## Let's strengthen our Foundation

Xuanzang, the Chinese pilgrim to India, in his 7<sup>th</sup>-century CE memoir, describes many *punyashalas* and *dharmashalas* (houses of goodness and charity) in Takka (Punjab) and other Indian cities. He recorded that these places served the poor and the unfortunate, providing them food, clothing and medicine, and also welcomed travellers and the destitute. So common were these, he wrote, that “travellers (like him) were never badly off”.

Al-Biruni, the Persian historian, who visited and lived in India for 16 years from 1017, mentions the practice of charity and almsgiving among Indians as he observed during his stay. He wrote, “It is obligatory with them (Indians) every day to give alms as much as possible.”

Giving is ingrained in the Indian ethos. And one of the best forms of giving is where neither the donor nor the recipient knows one another and where the giving helps the recipient become self-reliant. Foundation giving is that ‘best’ form of giving. One does not know who benefits from one's giving. We have all heard that when you give someone fish, you feed the person for a day; teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime. TRF not only gives the fish but teaches to fish.

As we enter the last quarter of the 22–23 Rotary year, it is time to focus and encourage Rotarians to give and invest in TRF. It is an investment which will bear fruit for years and decades to come. Share success stories about the work of the Foundation and encourage every Rotarian to give to TRF.

Significant achievements are not always made by giant leaps but by small and proper steps in the right direction. Encourage each club to contribute more than what was given earlier. Motivate clubs and Rotarians to contribute to the End Polio Now Fund. Let us all gear up to fulfil our promise of a polio-free world and keep doing good for our community and our world.

Where the vision is one year, cultivate flowers; where the vision is ten years, cultivate trees; where the vision is a lifetime, support and strengthen The Rotary Foundation.

Lead the way to the future of our Rotary Foundation.

**Bharat Pandya**  
TRF Trustee, 2022–26



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## Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,904

Rotaract clubs : 11,185

Interact clubs : 19,227

RCCs : 12,750

Rotary members : 1,187,842

Rotaract members: 174,891

Interact members : 442,221

*As on February 16, 2023*

## Membership Summary

As on February 1, 2023

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	136	6,394	7.32	71	462	55	243
2982	82	3,730	6.94	30	760	115	76
3000	131	5,428	10.32	102	1,521	324	215
3011	123	4,697	28.42	82	2,637	141	37
3012	151	3,752	23.08	73	1,393	94	61
3020	84	4,896	7.21	40	1,159	168	350
3030	100	5,414	14.94	126	2,169	369	382
3040	113	2,572	15.05	59	794	94	190
3053	65	2,729	16.75	35	566	55	128
3054	168	6,898	19.67	107	1,537	209	575
3060	102	4,931	14.87	66	2,400	81	152
3070	127	3,395	16.52	47	559	64	59
3080	107	4,322	12.86	120	2,232	213	118
3090	104	2,455	5.66	46	634	120	164
3100	103	2,173	11.83	14	109	39	151
3110	142	3,895	12.37	16	126	33	106
3120	90	3,674	15.68	35	404	36	55
3131	142	5,699	24.57	135	2,975	262	144
3132	91	3,625	12.72	36	499	126	168
3141	109	6,128	26.88	149	6,591	216	151
3142	103	3,873	21.25	90	3,016	148	89
3150	111	4,362	12.98	150	1,968	159	124
3160	78	2,617	9.09	32	233	20	82
3170	145	6,609	15.72	103	1,787	270	177
3181	87	3,629	10.00	36	422	223	117
3182	88	3,662	10.16	44	180	132	106
3190	168	6,932	20.04	217	5,131	288	74
3201	167	6,518	9.79	130	2,027	114	91
3203	93	4,937	7.80	75	942	243	39
3204	73	2,495	7.25	23	201	33	13
3211	156	5,061	8.52	8	108	31	133
3212	127	4,750	11.45	85	3,511	303	153
3231	95	3,430	8.37	37	411	99	417
3232	171	6,851	19.85	133	7,558	247	101
3240	109	3,652	16.59	70	1,417	414	226
3250	103	3,903	21.14	68	1,093	85	188
3261	90	3,258	19.74	17	50	26	44
3262	125	3,838	14.64	75	788	659	277
3291	152	3,974	24.89	138	2,042	111	697
<b>India Total</b>	<b>4,511</b>	<b>171,158</b>		<b>2,920</b>	<b>62,412</b>	<b>6,419</b>	<b>6,673</b>
3220	71	2,122	16.16	98	4,958	147	77
3271	160	3,211	18.44	161	2,485	255	28
3272	162	2,433	14.59	70	933	22	47
3281	311	7,302	18.34	281	2,270	157	207
3282	184	3,605	10.26	202	1,720	50	47
3292	154	5,790	18.65	182	4,864	146	133
<b>S Asia Total</b>	<b>5,553</b>	<b>195,621</b>		<b>3,914</b>	<b>79,642</b>	<b>7,196</b>	<b>7,212</b>

Source: RI South Asia Office



# Rotaractors run a special classroom by the bridge

Kiran Zehra



Little Jasmin scribbles on a piece of paper with crayons.

A t a slum near the Poonamallee bridge in Chennai, underneath the shade of a few trees, Rotaract Club of Chennai Central, RID 3232, has set up a classroom. Every Sunday the place is abuzz with 20 children ardently taking notes and listening to the lessons being taught. “This week they will start learning the names of fruits and vegetables in English, state capitals and addition in math,” says G Keerthi, the club president.

The path leading to the open classroom is muddy and lined with makeshift huts overlooking a large dirty pond. Small open ditches run through the path with dogs, cats and hens roaming around freely. “The living condition here is pathetic but the children are enthusiastic about learning and many of them don’t miss a single class,” she adds.

In partnership with Lure for Life, a Chennai-based NGO, the Rotaractors started the *Bridge* initiative “to improve the learning outcome of underprivileged children. Our classroom is a mix of gypsy and refugee children. They suffer from disparity and deprivation and are engaged in ragpicking or other small jobs,” says club secretary M Lavanya.

Three children attending these classes have been enrolled in orphanages and hostels. Keerthi has explained to the parents that “putting them in school is a better idea. But they argue that their child gets three proper meals and a decent place to stay at the orphanage. Some of the mothers want to send their children to school but none of them have an Aadhaar card. Without that, no school will accept them.”

When the club learnt about the Rohingya school in Balapur, near Hyderabad, set up by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a central government initiative, where close to 100 refugee children attend regular school, “we looked for similar schools in Chennai, but found none. We have been trying to get these children an Aadhaar card but we

have been unsuccessful. These classes are the best we can offer them now,” says the club president.

After reaching the spot, the Rotaractors quickly begin to work. Keerthi says “every minute is precious. We just get one day a week and want to make the most of it.” While Lavanya goes to each hut and calls the children out for class, Mythili M, another club member, stops a gypsy woman with her child and enquires where she is taking him instead of sending him to class. “I have to make money so he is going to sell mirrors and combs with me,” says the woman. The Rotaractor argues that the child “has been regular to class. Let him stay back.” It takes a lot of persuading, but in the end, the woman agrees.

Kumar D and Keerthana C, two other Rotaractors, clean the classroom floor as the children begin to assemble. Kumar then brings a bucket of water and Lavanya helps them wash their hands. Everyone, including the Rotaractors, sits on the floor and classes commence. The first exercise is ‘Introduce yourself’. Raghav (12), confidently says “Hi, my name is Raghav, how are you?” His English pronunciation is clear and he smiles waiting for a response.



**Above:** Rotaractors Mythili M (right) and Keerthana C (left) interacting with the children.

**Below:** Club president G Keerthi (right) and M Lavanya (left) teaching the children to paint.



“We have come a long way from where we started. These kids who don’t want to miss a single class now were once totally uninterested and didn’t even want to be part of this classroom.” Club members had to come up with interesting games, rewards, and ideas to keep them engaged. “This is not a regular classroom and there is no compulsion for them to sit here. We had to be on our toes to keep them engaged. It was challenging,” says project chairman S Kokila. She adds that it felt great to see so many kids showing up regularly for these classes. “I cannot imagine what they can achieve if they had access to formal schooling,” she says.

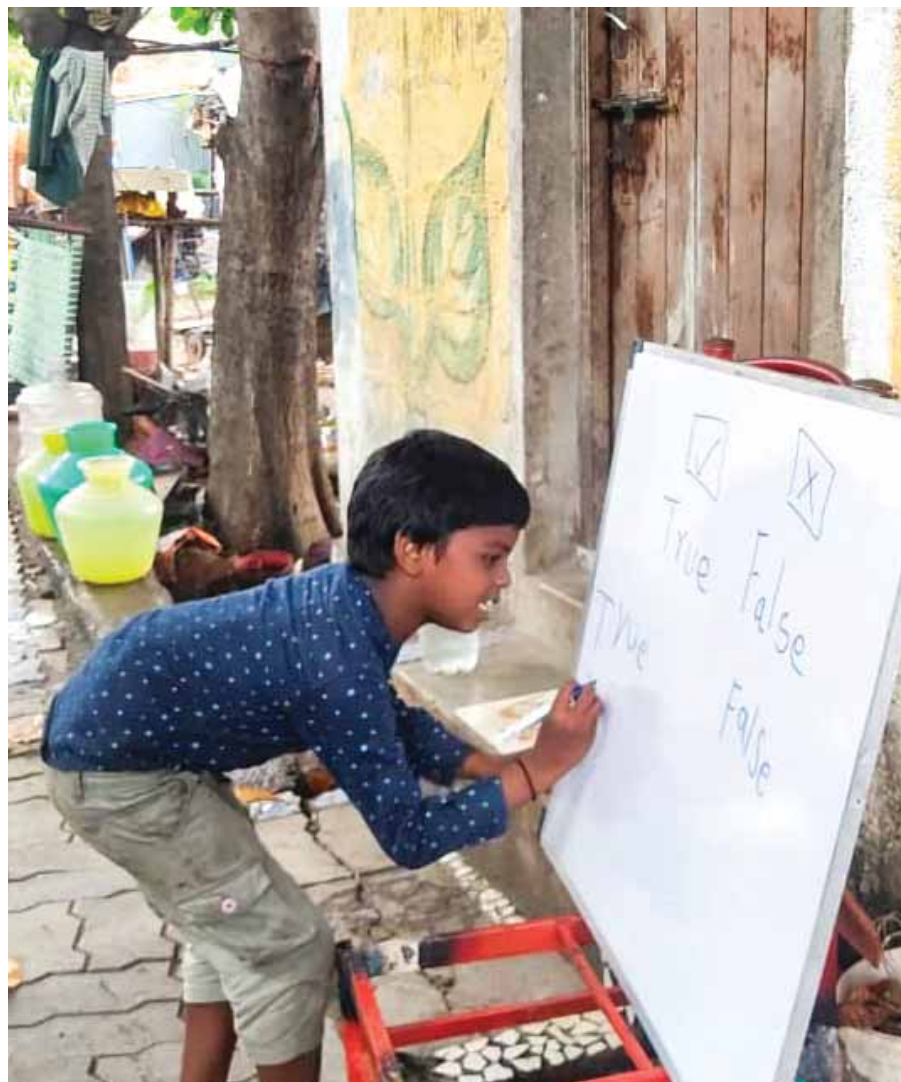
The club provides these children with a basic education kit and replenishes their pencils and notebooks when needed. “We can see the change in their behaviour from the time we started in September 2022. These are no ‘slum kids’ as some people address them. They are only children who happen to live in a slum. They are not different from other children and they learn what you teach them at the same speed a child in a private school would,” says Kokila.



### Mothers' help

Apart from basic education for these children, Rotaractors also conduct special sessions in English speaking, writing and reading, art and craft, exercises and yoga, soft skills, life skills, and social awareness. All thanks to the efforts of a few mothers from the slums, the children sit throughout the class. Pushpa, the mother of three-year-old Vaishali, minds the class and any child who wants to slip out or distract the class receives a stern stare and a strict command to "sit down".

Yasmin's mother says, "I don't know if my child will ever get to go to school but these classes have given us hope. Maybe our children will have a better future than us." Not only do the mothers stand and watch the class in progress, but some also try to learn what







**Clockwise from top, right:** Rhyme time at the school by the bridge; Club president Keerthi, Keerthana C and club secretary Lavanya M demonstrate an art activity for the children; A child participates in a true or false exercise; A club member helps a child to write; Lavanya helps a child wash her hands; Children display their artwork in the presence of Rotaractors (from L) Keerthana, Mythili, Kokila S, Keerthi, Kumar D and Lavanya and a mother.



is being taught. “I now know a few English words, thanks to the Rotaractors,” she smiles.

The children themselves have big dreams. While one wants to be a cricketer the other wants to be a teacher. As for Raghav “I don’t want to sell combs or books. I want to become a teacher.”

Keerthi says that strengthening their bond with the mothers could help in making this project sustainable. “It will encourage members from within their community to play a direct part in the project. They are interested in making things better. At the same time, we need funds to improve the current setup.”

The Rotaractors celebrated Diwali and Christmas with these children.

Pictures by Kiran Zehra

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



# Unfolding the TRF magic

Rasheeda Bhagat

Over successive years, The Rotary Foundation has been increasing its goal of collecting donations from Rotarians, so that it can help Rotary clubs around the world do better, bigger, more impactful and more sustainable service projects. “Every year, the RI Board sets a certain goal

for TRF collection. In 2019–20 that goal was \$370 million; the next year, 2020–21, the goal was \$410 million. As we all know that year started and ended with Covid,” said TRF trustee Bharat Pandya, addressing the multi-district TRF recognition meeting for zone 5 hosted by RID 3211 in Thiruvananthapuram.

This, added Pandya, surprised many Rotarians, who “thought this was madness. They felt we should have reduced our goal to \$350 million from \$370 million and not raised it to \$410. But thanks to the generosity of people like you, instead of meeting our goal of \$410 million, TRF collected \$440 million that year.



And that proves the commitment of Rotarians to TRF.”

While individually no Rotarian could do much to change the world, “through TRF we can certainly make our world a better place to live in. TRF is our window to the world. Look through that window and you will find hundreds and thousands of people who do not have access to safe water and proper sanitation.”

Striking a poignant note, Pandya said a peep through the TRF window, and the opportunity it provides, would show them “pregnant mothers struggling with their pregnancy because of lack of

access to good and affordable healthcare. Or young girls, 10–11-year-old, pulled out of schools at puberty because there are no separate toilets for boys and girls in their schools.” Or slightly older girls deprived of schooling because they had to walk a few km to reach their schools, and their parents were terrified to put them through this daily risk.

Once a Rotarian had run her eyes through this window, “you have two options; close your eyes and pretend nothing is wrong and go about your business as usual, or do something for them. And the best way to do something is through TRF programmes.”

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The Gates Foundation website says that as far as the polio eradication programme is concerned, the world will not be where it is today without Rotary, and the world will not get where it wants to get without Rotary.

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**Sewing machines lined up for distribution to women.**



Referring to the trustee chair Ian Riseley, who was scheduled to attend the event, but was constrained to address it through a short video clip, as he had to be hospitalised in Mumbai, Pandya said during the beginning of this Rotary year, when Riseley was planning his visit to India, he said India was such an important country that he wanted to come here twice during his year as trustee chair. His first visit to India was in September 2022, and he was very keen to come to zone 5 in South India, “because I told him this zone is not only a top contributor from India, but probably among the 4 or 5 top contributing zones in the world. So he said I must visit that zone and let’s try and have a multidistrict event.”

He thanked RRFC John Daniel for organising the mega event in which EMGA, ARRFCs, and several district governors from zone 5 participated, along with AKS members and major donors. Pandya was all praise for the two mega projects that the Kerala minister for general education and labour V Sivankutty inaugurated — distribution of 1,000 sewing machines donated by PDG John Daniel through his family trust Y Daniel Foundation and 1,000 bicycles donated by PDG EK Sagadhevan.



Thanking all the generous donors who were attending the multidistrict recognition dinner, including AKS members, the TRF trustee said, “The world of TRF starts at our doorstep and extends to all corners of the world; whether it is setting up a dialysis centre in Thiruvananthapuram, or a blood bank in Bengaluru or Delhi, building check dams in rural parts of RI district 3141 or a huge five-storeyed diabetes facility in Rajkot with funds from TRF, our constant endeavour is to improve people’s lives.”

Pandya went on to give details about the Programs of Scale that TRF has launched, with the first two grants going to Zambia to combat malaria, and Nigeria for mother and child health. In Zambia, this grant of \$6 million — \$2 million each by the Gates Foundation,

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Look through that window and  
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proper sanitation.

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World Vision and TRF — had been given to two districts, covering one third of the country. “In the last 18 months, in the areas in Zambia where this programme is fully implemented, deaths from malaria have come down by 50 per cent. That is the kind of impact TRF programmes have.”

In Ukraine too, in eight weeks, for the Ukraine response fund, Rotarians had donated \$15 million, and “in the next four months, by September, all the money was disbursed... whether for ambulances, relief material, etc, through 440 grants. And the trustees have now set up a new Ukraine response fund. So many times, we say TRF doesn’t respond quickly. Well, surely, there can’t be a quicker response than this!”

Pandya concluded by saying that today, in the Rotary world, including TRF, India is held in very high esteem. In the last five years, during three years India has been the second highest contributor to TRF, and during the other two years, the third highest. This was a matter of pride to all Rotarians.



PDGs EK Sagadhevan (RID 3203), AV Pathy (RID 3201) and DG S Rajmohan Nair (RID 3201).

# Polioplus — jewel in Rotary's crown



Leema Rose Martin, member of RC Coimbatore Aakruthi, RID 3201, being honoured by TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya for upgrading as Level-2 AKS member, in the presence of (from L) PDGs R Balaji Babu, Harikrishnan Nambiar, S Muthupalaniappan, Pathy, DGs Nair, K Babumon, his spouse Beena, Rtn Kavitha Vellingiri, PDGs John Daniel and Madhav Chandran.

Addressing the multidistrict TRF recognition dinner for zone 5 TRF donors, TRF trustee Bharat Pandya said TRF's flagship programme is "our Polioplus programme, which has today given Rotary a seat at every government platform in the world." Often he had heard Rotarians despair and complain that Rotary doesn't get proper recognition for its PP programme. Well, one of the partners of Rotary's polio programme "is the Gates Foundation. Go to the Foundation website and read what it writes about the PP programme. It says that as far as the polio eradication programme is concerned, the world will not be where it is today without Rotary, and the world will not get where it wants to get without Rotary."

This was not all. He added that last October, at the World Health Summit in Berlin, there was a pledge taken by various governments and organisations on what they will give in the next three years to finally eradicate polio. The second last speaker was TRF trustee chair Ian Riseley,

and he said on behalf of Rotarians, I am pledging \$150 million for polio eradication. That was the second highest pledge. The last speaker was the CEO of the Gates Foundation. "He pledged \$1.2 billion for the next three years, but more important, while pledging, he made our trustee chair Ian stand there, and pointing to him, said that but for Rotary, the status of polio would not have been where it is today."

Pandya added that Rotary's slogan "this close to Polio" and its goal to eradicate it completely, is indeed close. "Bill Gates gives full credit for polio eradication work to Rotary. Do you know that all the money that the Gates Foundation has given till now — all of \$1.5 billion, and another \$1.2 billion pledged for the next three years — is only through Rotary? It is not given through WHO, UNICEF or world governments, but through TRF. If WHO or UNICEF wants a grant for polio, they have to approach TRF for that money."

The last thought Pandya left with the large gathering of 500 people was

that in the recent Gates Foundation report, Bill Gates himself had written that the Foundation has given a lot of money for polio eradication but the "real work has been done by the Rotarians. And he goes on to write that when — he does not say 'if' but 'when' — polio finally gets eradicated, the first call I will make is to the TRF headquarters and thank Rotarians for the work they have done. If that is not recognition, then what is it?"

Sharing another bit of "good news" with the gathering, Pandya said that while in 2021, six cases of polio had been found, in 2022, the number had gone up to 30 cases. "But from Sep 6, 2022, onwards, not a single case has been found either in Pakistan, Afghanistan or Mozambique." Five months without a single polio case gave the hope that perhaps in 2026 the world, and Rotarians, might be finally able to say: Yes, polio has been eradicated from the world. "Then, each of us my friends, can lift our collars, our heads, with pride and say this is our gift to the children and grandchildren of the world."





TRF Trustee Pandya being greeted by RID 3211 DG Babumon. From L: Meera Daniel, PDGs John Daniel, R Balaji Babu, Muthupalaniappan, Beena and PDG Sagadhevan are also present.

Addressing the meet, Kerala minister for general education and labour Sivankutty thanked Rotary for the tremendous help it has been extending through its selfless service projects in Kerala. These include helping the victims of the several

natural calamities the state has faced in recent times, providing homes to flood victims and valuable diagnostic and treatment medical equipment to government hospitals. While the sewing machines which were being distributed to women from disadvantaged families will help them get a secure livelihood, the bicycles will empower 1,000 girls

to cycle their way to schooling and knowledge.

PDG Daniel said each of the 1,000 sewing machines cost ₹5,000 (project cost ₹50 lakh), and it would help 1,000 women support their families. The 1,000 bicycles, donated by PDG Sagadhevan and clubs from RID 3211, will be given to girls in government and government-aided schools to prevent their dropping out from school.

Apart from RRFC Daniel and PDG Sagadhevan, host DG K Babumon (RID 3211), EMGA Madhav Chandran, and zone 5 ARRFCs PDGs R Balaji Babu, Harikrishnan Nambiar, A Karthikeyan, A V Pathy, S Muthupalaniappan, DGs V Selvanathan (2981), P Saravanan (2982), Rajmohan Nair (3201), Pramod Nayanar (3204) and B Elangakumaran (3203) attended the event. Fifteen AKS members (from 2020–2023), four of them second level, were honoured.



From L: Beena, DG Babumon, Kerala minister for general education and labour V Sivankutty, PDG John Daniel, Meera and TRF Trustee Pandya.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat



# District Wise TRF Contributions as on January 2023

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution
<b>India</b>					
2981	19,151	512	0	1,125	20,788
2982	10,196	2,238	4,061	33,116	49,611
3000	23,610	3,169	0	0	26,779
3011	38,119	8,063	25,127	238,088	309,396
3012	13,280	752	65,235	140,713	219,980
3020	106,894	7,902	40,000	400	155,196
3030	51,772	290	0	1,275	53,337
3040	18,660	2,006	0	22,156	42,822
3053	41,122	136	0	0	41,258
3054	9,130	826	0	31,500	41,456
3060	71,305	1,500	0	64,635	137,440
3070	47,956	2,570	50,233	11,296	112,055
3080	27,492	7,482	0	38,163	73,137
3090	8,368	0	5,651	0	14,019
3100	52,929	400	25,012	0	78,341
3110	21,034	454	24,304	631,051	676,843
3120	23,823	411	0	0	24,234
3131	305,668	8,789	36,315	302,254	653,026
3132	40,636	2,391	50,000	2,012	95,039
3141	681,895	32,756	102,003	1,451,865	2,268,519
3142	195,175	3,721	24,866	77,045	300,807
3150	76,936	27,423	43,012	417	147,788
3160	3,749	2,363	0	3,675	9,786
3170	80,673	33,854	15,506	862	130,895
3181	77,084	622	25	912	78,644
3182	36,769	2,789	0	0	39,559
3190	63,921	7,350	38,170	36,593	146,034
3201	95,560	23,874	12,295	414,030	545,760
3203	7,124	12,833	1,000	30,054	51,011
3204	5,645	806	0	152	6,603
3211	73,343	5,065	10,000	1,049	89,458
3212	178,860	37,834	305	52,146	269,145
3231	60,394	23,432	32,278	11,569	127,672
3232	60,503	58,338	19,358	201,544	339,743
3240	80,731	14,913	1,000	3,622	100,266
3250	13,030	290	0	13,605	26,925
3261	16,616	917	0	5,277	22,809
3262	46,043	463	700	34,012	81,218
3291	50,452	1,172	40,533	8,190	100,348
<b>India Total</b>	<b>2,835,646</b>	<b>340,708</b>	<b>666,989</b>	<b>3,864,404</b>	<b>7,707,747</b>
3220 Sri Lanka	48,474	8,333	4,000	226	61,033
3271 Pakistan	25	22,125	0	250	22,400
3272 Pakistan	455	12,687	0	5,000	18,142
3281 Bangladesh	58,696	3,546	22,125	154,245	238,612
3282 Bangladesh	46,640	6,701	2,000	10,320	65,662
3292 Nepal	165,773	20,236	49,167	29,830	265,006
<b>South Asia Total</b>	<b>3,155,709</b>	<b>414,336</b>	<b>744,281</b>	<b>4,064,275</b>	<b>8,378,601</b>

Annual Fund (AF) includes SHARE, Areas of Focus, World Fund and Disaster Response.

Source: RI South Asia Office



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# Panduranga Setty

## a role model, inspiring and trusted friend

**Rajendra Saboo**

**S**mall in height, lean in structure, but bold and herculean in intelligence and vision, who embraced a range of thoughts, Panduranga Setty was a rare man. I got to know him before 1978 when he was the incoming district governor of District 319 and thereafter became close to him. In 1970, Pandu's sisters Shantha and Nirmala came to Chandigarh to visit the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama with Swami Shastrananda. They became our guests and were looked after by my wife Usha.

I visited Bangalore 2–3 times a year since my parents had taken

summer residence there. Also, my sister Sneh and Gaja Nand could meet Pandu and visit RC Bangalore. I became interested in Rotary after becoming president of RC Chandigarh in 1971–72. During the period, I was in Bangalore, where my father had built a new house, but on the day of the housewarming ceremony in 1971, my elder brother Mahendra passed away. My cousin, Prayag Malpani, who was close to Pandu Setty's family and Pandu arranged the cremation.

The Rotary story of Pandu started when he joined RC Bangalore in 1959. He became club president in 1969–70. He was ahead of me in

Rotary and our journey was very pleasant, and became more so when I met him and his wife Vasantha at the International Assembly where I was group discussion leader in Boca Raton, Florida, where the incoming governors were oriented. The great class of Pandu had Dr Virendra Gangwal, Sudarshan Agarwal, Prem Bhalla and Dr Badar Maskati as incoming governors in 1978–79. He started business with the Krishna Flour Mills and expanded to manufacturing animal feed. He supported his younger brother Ramachandra and a few years later became district governor. With his vision, he parted ways with Ramachandra giving him the animal feed unit.

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*As RI board member, I got **Rotary News** certified as the Rotary regional magazine for South Asia. And Pandu became its editor and publisher.*

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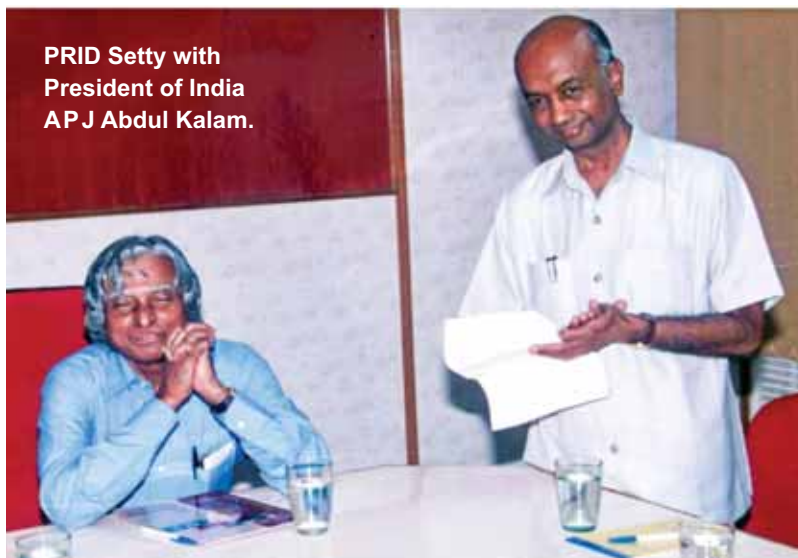


Panduranga Setty was on the RI board during the term of Rajendra Saboo as RI president.

In 1979–80, RI President Jim Bomar was concerned about the per capita US dollars, which were blocked from Indian Rotarians. I was asked to know how the money could be remitted to RI in US. I was able to get an installment approved for the per capita funds, but not for the Rotary magazines. I chaired a committee to decide the printing of the *Rotarian* in India and also explore having a regional magazine. I knew the regional magazine should be in Bangalore and went to Bangalore and worked with Pandu to find the possibility. PDG Debu Hosali had earlier published *Rotary News*, which was not published every month, but occasionally. We found that Hosali had sold the magazine to PRID Ramesh Pai and when we talked to him, he was happy to hand over the publication to Rotary.

Pandu and I discussed taking control of the magazine and reconstituting it following the policies and guidelines set forth by The Rotary Foundation. As RI director, I took up the regional magazine and with the recommendation of a subcommittee, the RI board approved it. By 1983, the first issue of *Rotary News* was ready to be published by RI President Bill Skelton at the Asia Zone-II Institute in Calcutta. As a member of the RI board, I was able to get the magazine recognised and certified as the Rotary regional magazine for South Asia. Pandu became the editor and publisher of the magazine. It was kudos to Pandu.

Pandu became not only a Rotary colleague but a friend and then a family member. He had great influence in Germany, and though I had German collaborations, he helped a relative who was travelling through Germany and needed medical treatment. He immediately arranged with some senior surgeons to take up the case.

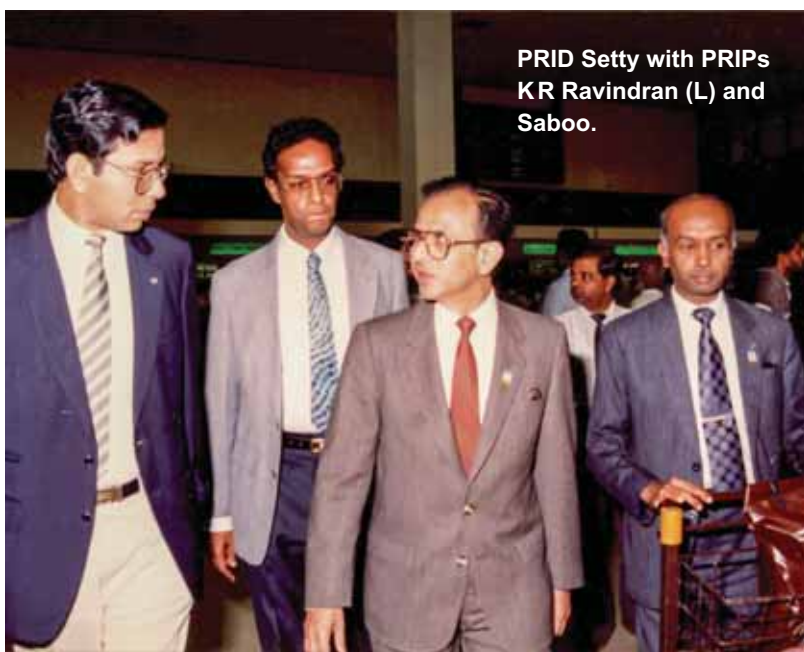


**PRID Setty with  
President of India  
APJ Abdul Kalam.**

Pandu lost the RI directorship to Sudarshan Agarwal, but the next term, was unanimously nominated as RI director for 1991–93, the first from South India. At the Calcutta Institute, he was the incoming RI director.

Let me recall the institute in Kathmandu. I was already nominated as RI president. I was challenged for RI president and the condition put to me was that Pandu should resign as RI

director nominee. It was preposterous, Pandu was on my board and became my voice for any proposal on the board. After the Mexico Convention, our board meeting was at Cuernavaca, a resort. It was a custom that the board would travel from the location of the convention to some resort. However, the blocks of the complex were not comfortable at all. I was thinking of shifting to another place, which would



**PRID Setty with PRIPs  
KR Ravindran (L) and  
Saboo.**





PRID Setty with PRIP Rajendra Saboo in Mexico.

be insulting to the local Rotarians who had organised the stay. I talked to Pandu, and he said that I should leave it to him. In the next board meeting the first item was our location, Pandu put it in a way that all the board members said that they would stay here. This was Pandu becoming totally dependable for me.

In 1991–92, Pandu phoned to say he had heard that at the election of RID 3080, there was canvassing against my strict directions. The report of PDG PC Thomas, my district conference representative, was clear. I called PC asking what had actually happened. Thanks to Pandu alerting me, I immediately asked executive committee chair Bhichai Rattakul to go to Chandigarh, and the result was an election with no disqualification of any candidate.

YP Das's nomination as governor was annulled but later he got, almost unanimously, elected as governor-nominee for 1993–94.

During 1991–92, Pandu was on RI committees and both Pandu and his wife Vasantha came up to our condo

in Evanston. He was so humble and inconspicuous. Then came Orlando Convention, Florida, US, and Pandu took care of my family and the reunion. I cannot forget how Vasantha brought sarees for all the wives of the board members to wear at a social gathering.

In 1992–93, Cliff Dochterman, who had great admiration for Pandu, made him chair of the Executive Committee of the board and his influence was to get KR Ravindran as a training leader for the International Assembly, the first from Sri Lanka. This was the first step towards Ravindran becoming an RI director and finally RI president.

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Pandu was on a maximum number of nomination committees for RI presidents, including KR Ravindran, and recently Gordon McInally.

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Ravindran found in Pandu a teacher in life, in values. Pandu visited Sri Lanka during my year as RI president and initiated the artificial foot facility in Kandy.

Pandu served as chairman of South East Asia Regional PolioPlus Committee and guided it year after year to ensure that South East Asia was certified polio-free. His involvement in Rotary has helped a large number of our programmes, including providing comfort stations for girls' schools, the literacy programme, housing for the poor, etc. He received RI's *Service Above Self* Award.

Pandu was on a maximum number of nomination committees for RI presidents, including KR Ravindran, and recently Gordon McInally.

When I visited Bangalore, I had lunch with him, and long talks about his family, and who would head the empire of his trust after him. I visited his college RV College of Engineering; and Pandu always obliged when I recommended deserving students for admission. The college later became a university.

Both Vasantha and Pandu were generous and cordial hosts. In their simple and elegant home we would have South Indian dinner. Later Vasantha had gout and could not move much. Past RI president Kalyan Banerjee greatly praised Pandu not only professionally but as a Rotarian at the highest echelons of the organisation.

Pandu and Vasantha's Rotary life journey was for decades. Usha and I were lucky to have them as our co-travellers and sincere friends. Pandu's qualities were such that even those opposed to his views, admired him.

My great disappointment was that I could not have Pandu to be the trustee of The Rotary Foundation. During the term of incoming RI president John Kenny, I pleaded with him to have Pandu as trustee, given his vast experience in managing a trust and other institutions. Unfortunately, he felt Pandu was too old and accepted my next recommendation, and Ashok Mahajan became the trustee.

Rotary Club of Chandigarh had the Project *Heart Line* for heart surgery of children up to 20 years of age, including those from Pakistan.

In 2007, a handsome 13 year-old-Tauseef

could not be admitted in PGI Hospitals where the club did the surgeries. However, it was a critical cardiac condition of pulmonary atresia, with a missing pulmonary valve and no blood circulation to one lung. I asked the surgeon in PGI, and they said that there is one person, Dr Devi Shetty in Bangalore, who could do this critical procedure. Both the boy and his father had visa for Chandigarh. With help from a chain of Rotarians in Delhi the visa for Bangalore was available in six hours and in the morning they both took a

flight to Delhi and then to Bangalore. The chain ended with Pandu. I sought his help, and as he knew Dr Shetty well, he got into action immediately. An ambulance from the Narayana Hrudayalaya hospital met the boy and his father at the airport and Dr Shetty did the operation which took nine hours, giving Tauseef a heart which is half Pakistani and half Indian and after 72 hours his surgery was successful — a unique case. This again was Pandu.

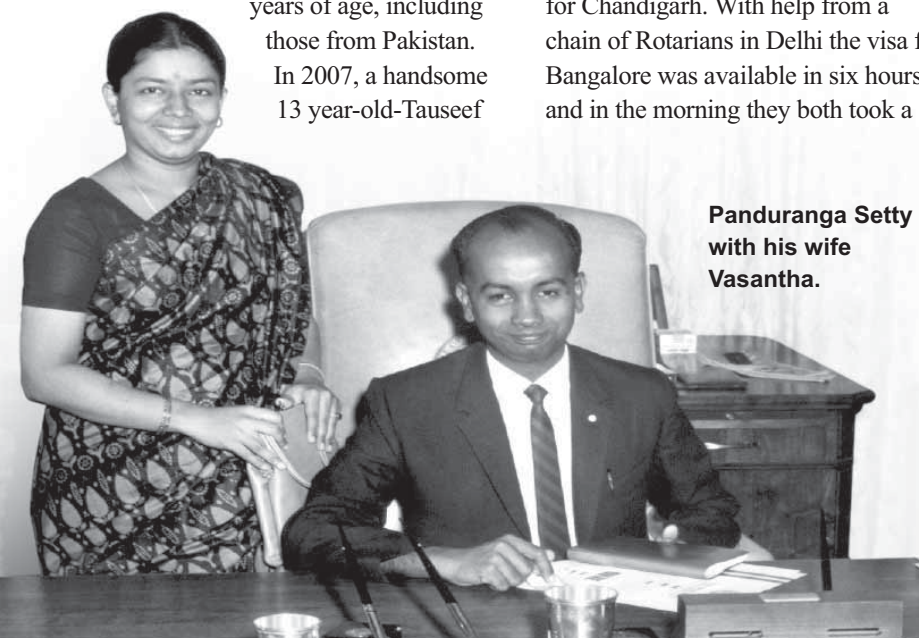
I can tell numerous such stories. When personal help was needed for our watch retailing business, Ethos, Pandu arranged the places we wanted. Pandu never ever wished anything in return. He was a friend, special and unparalleled person. I have cherished and remain proud of his friendship.

Dr Meda K Panduranga Setty could have too many adjectives. He was a role model, an inspiring and trusted friend, a leader with humility, sincerity and integrity. He has been an epitome, deep like an ocean, high like the sky and practical like earth.

*The writer is a past RI president*



PRID Setty greets noted industrialist Sir M Visvesvaraya.



**Panduranga Setty  
with his wife  
Vasantha.**



# Singapore Rotarians partner with RC Sonkutch for school furniture

**Rasheeda Bhagat**

**W**ay back in the late 1990s, Rotary Club of Sonkutch, RID 3040, Madhya Pradesh, realised the stark deprivation children from disadvantaged families, who study in government schools, face when it comes to facilities and infrastructure in their schools. Even basic facilities like safe drinking water, clean toilets and decent benches and tables are lacking in these schools. “The result is that they lose interest in attending school and drop out before reaching even Class 5. Many of these children are forced into child labour. So Rotarians from our club pledged that they will ensure that all government schools in and around Sonkutch and other parts of RID 3040 have school furniture and no student

sits on floor anymore. And we have succeeded to a great extent,” says club member and PDG Dr Zamin Hussain.

The club set out in right earnest, almost 25 years ago, to get various matching grants and subsequently global grants from The Rotary Foundation and implemented many grant projects for these schools in partnership with various clubs in the US, Austria, Germany and Singapore. “With the help of these grants we could gift furniture and other basic facilities to more than 1,400 schools in our area, benefitting thousands of students. We also provided safe water, toilet blocks and science labs,” he adds.

The moment the students shift from the floor and are not obliged to crouch

and bend upon their notebooks and textbooks, the benefit to their spine, thanks to their improved posture, is tremendous and they are saved from a plethora of spinal problems, for now and the future. The other health benefit is that since a proper distance of 25cm is maintained between the eye and the book, there is no strain on the eyes, preventing considerable refractive errors. But above all, proper schoolroom furniture gives the children dignity, as they feel they are not children of a lesser god and don’t have to sit on the floor any more. This enhances their interest in attending classes and paying attention to what is being taught in school.

An interesting fallout is that now they are seated right, the children’s handwriting improves too!

**Peter Brock, member of RC Singapore, posing for a photograph with students.**





PDG Zamin Hussain, DGND Shahul Hameed from Singapore and RC Sonkutch president Dinesh Carpenter at the Anand Society School for Special Children where furniture were gifted. Rtn Brock is seen on the foreground.

PDG Hussain adds that in the last few years RC Sonkutch has partnered with RC Singapore “in our crusade against illiteracy and Rotarians from this club are helping us to purchase furniture and gift them to schools. Recently with their help we could provide about 1,300 sets of furniture to schools in Sonkatch, Indore, Ujjain and Khargone. They also helped us through a global grant to provide medical equipment during the Covid pandemic.”

Recently a team of six Rotarians, under the leadership of DGND Dr Shahul Hameed from Singapore visited Sonkatch to meet the students, teachers and local Rotarians. They also visited a government hospital where the club has set up a Rotary ward.

In order to supplement water resources, RC Singapore has also extended help to install 270 rooftop rainwater harvesting units which will divert rainwater to borewells through sand filters, in order to recharge the

water table and ensure the availability of water throughout the year for the community.

During his visit, Dr Hameed expressed his happiness with both the projects and the way they were being implemented. “We are happy to note that they will indeed create a lasting change in this region, and help the children study better. RC Singapore will be happy to continue as a partner for future projects too.”

Another Rotarian from the Singapore club, Peter Brock, observed that the school desk project “provides not only a physical benefit, but it also enhances the psychological needs of the students. Using the desks provides each student with additional confidence to contribute as well as to attend classes.”

On the rainwater harvesting project, the Singapore Rotarians were happy that this would provide a practical and sustainable benefit to the entire community. They thanked RC Sonkutch president Dinesh Carpenter and secretary Dinesh Rathod for working so hard to make these projects a huge success. ■





# You asked Gordon McNally answered

If you ask Gordon McNally anything about his upcoming year as Rotary International president, he'll immediately stop you. "It's not about my year. It's about one of Rotary's years," he corrects. "I'm a great believer in continuity, and I don't see the years in isolation."



On a blustery October day, McNally (that's pronounced MAK'-ihn-al-ee) sat down with six members of Rotary's communications team to take questions gathered via social media from Rotary members around the world. He has a quick sense of humour and an easy banter that filled the room with laughter as a film crew set up boom mikes, cameras and lights. In introducing himself as a member of the Rotary Club of South Queensferry, Scotland, he quipped about his distinctive speech: "Despite the lack of an accent, I am Scottish, and very proud of that fact."

McNally's Scottish heritage is apparent in his office, where a brightly coloured landscape painting by the Scottish artist John Lowrie Morrison adorns a wall. Scotland isn't always as dreary as it is typically depicted, he notes. "Sometimes it's a very bright place." In fact, there are a lot of stereotypes about Scotland that McNally is looking to move past. "The tartan, the plaid, it's very traditional, very stereotypical," he says. His presidential tie, instead, was inspired by the bright colours used by Morrison, his favourite artist, along with the colours in a seashell from Thailand that helped inspire his presidential theme. Among other colourful curiosities in McNally's office is a giant cardboard rendition of his head, which he received after a Rotary institute in Minneapolis. Visitors are keen to hold it up for social media selfies. "I think they get more sense out of the head than they do out of me," he says with a laugh.

McNally joined the South Queensferry club when he was 26 years old. He and his wife, Heather, had recently gotten married and wanted to put down roots in the community outside of Edinburgh. A farmer they had met invited them to a Rotary social event and then to a couple of Rotary meetings, and before McNally knew it, he was on the road to Rotary membership. Heather

McInally is also a Rotarian, belonging to the Borderlands satellite club of the Rotary Club of Selkirk. “I couldn’t see how a dentist working in isolation in Edinburgh could make a huge difference in the world,” he recalls. “But I very quickly realised that by being part of Rotary, I could, and I did.”

He would like to use his year — scratch that, the 2023–24 Rotary year — to spotlight mental health, an issue that has touched his family directly and that is all too often kept under wraps. McInally is an ambassador for Bipolar UK, an organisation that supports people with the illness as well as their families and caregivers. Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland recently launched a partnership with the organisation to bring members’ skills to help build a more robust network of support groups around the country. “I’m a big believer in using Rotary members’ skills, rather than just their chequebooks,” he says.

The following is a condensed version of the town hall. Watch it at [rotary.org/mcinallytownhall](https://rotary.org/mcinallytownhall).

### **What are your core values, and how do they shape how you lead?**

Natarajan Sundaresan, Rotary Club of Koothapakkam, India

My core value can be expressed in one word, and that is “caring.” I like

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I lost my brother to suicide.

I share this not to get people’s sympathy, but to make people realise that everybody is affected by this sort of thing. We can’t sweep it under the carpet.

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to think that I care for people. Professionally as a dentist, I cared for people for many, many years. It’s something that was instilled in me by my parents. It’s something that we have instilled in our own children. And the great thing is I now see it being instilled in our grandchildren. I think if the world was a more caring place, a kinder place, then it would be a much happier place and a much more peaceful place. Peace is one of the issues that I particularly want to see us move forward.

### **How can we reignite members of Rotary who appear to have “lost their spark”?**

Jannine and Paul Birtwistle, Rotary Club of Guernsey, in the Channel Islands

I know Jannine and Paul very well, and it’s nice to receive a question from them. I think the way to reignite the lost spark in certain members of Rotary is to make sure that the Rotary club experience is as good as it can be and suits everybody. It’s not a case of one-size-fits-all. Some clubs will want to meet in a country club and spend 2.5 hours over lunch. Other clubs will

want to meet for 45 minutes on a Saturday morning over coffee and a bagel, and then get out and do service.

It all comes down to the service. We are a membership organisation and a service organisation. It’s not either/or. We need to be out there doing service, because not only will we enjoy that more, we will also see more people want to come and join us because they can see us.

### **What concrete plans does Rotary have to address climate change in 2023–24?**

Abdur Rahman, Rotary Club of Secunderabad, India

One of the big projects that we’re working on at the moment is planting mangroves in various places around the world, and there are many others. But we have to remember that Rotary, on its own, will not be able to solve the problem of climate change. We need to work at the level we are capable of working at and encourage and advocate governments around the world to ensure that we address the issue of climate change going forward.



**You can't gather a group of journalists and not allow them to ask a few questions of their own. Here's what *Rotary* magazine's editors wanted to know:**

**Tell us about your presidential theme.**

The theme is going to be *Create Hope in the World*. I'm a great believer that everything starts with hope. While I was in Thailand inaugurating a village that Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland had built after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, I met a lady. She looked to be about 70 or 80 years of age, and it turned out she was only about 50. She had lost everything in the tsunami. Her house had been destroyed. And as I looked around her house, there was nothing else there. This was a new home, but she had lost everything. But she insisted I take a seashell that she had saved for over 30 years. She said, "I had lost everything, including hope. But Rotary has given me hope to continue." And I have this shell to this day. If people don't have hope, then they will never be able to make their way forward. It's a call to action: *Create hope in the world*.

**What are your priorities?**

In terms of continuity, we want to carry on empowering girls and

women. Also, we're going to be encouraging people to do virtual exchanges. That will speak to peacebuilding from the ground up. It's not about stopping wars; it's about stopping wars from starting. Prevention is better than cure. Almost every one of our areas of focus has the potential to do that.

The third thing is a mental health initiative. Coming out of the pandemic, there are a lot of people who are struggling with poor mental health. I think it's the next pandemic. I've got experience with friends who have suffered poor mental health. I guess we've all suffered through poor mental health on occasions. Rotary has to be big enough and brave enough to enter that space and to start talking about where we can make a difference. At the most basic level, it's just opening up the conversation about mental health and helping people get access to any professional help that they might need, and then supporting them through that journey.

I lost my brother to suicide. It's still very painful. I share this not to get people's sympathy, but to make people realise that everybody is affected by this sort of thing. We can't sweep it under the carpet. As a global network of 1.4 million people, we do have an opportunity to make a difference in making it less of a taboo and less of a stigma.

**You have also served as president of Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland. What did you learn from that experience that you'll bring to this role?**

I learned how to sleep in different beds every two or three days — I travelled a great deal during that year around Britain and Ireland. I learned that Rotary clubs are all different, and that everybody has a different interest. Not everybody is as passionate as I am — I'd sometimes feel I'm a bit of a zealot. But everybody has something. And the secret is to tap into people's interests and to make sure that they're allowed to do things that they want to do. That speaks to bringing members in as well. We don't bring members in and then tell them what they need to do. We bring members in and ask them what Rotary can do for them.

**You're a dentist. If you were a tooth, which would you be?**

I'd probably be an incisor, because that's the first tooth that does the work. You don't shove anything straight to the very back. You lead with your incisors, and I like to think I lead from the front. That said, an incisor is no more important than any other tooth; all are equally important in the eating process.

**How can we motivate more Rotaractors to join Rotary clubs?**

Dale Kerns, Rotary Club of North East, Maryland

We need to bring them into Rotary clubs as Rotaractors and allow them to help shape the club going forward. We talk about mentoring. But there's reverse mentoring, as well. We can learn so much from Rotaractors. One of the most successful places in the world at integrating Rotaractors into Rotary is in Hong Kong. They move seamlessly from Rotaract into Rotary.

As a result, there's hardly a division. They have a wonderful way of integrating Rotaract and Rotary together. Both sides gain so much from that. People say that Rotaract is the future of Rotary, but it's actually the present.

**What youth programmes are important to you?**

Lindy Beatie, Rotary Club of Penn Valley, California

I'm a great fan of RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards). We have seen very successful RYLAs in our part of the

world. If you take a high school student with potential to a RYLA experience, the change that can take place is amazing. Sometimes the quiet, introverted young students who go to a RYLA experience have, by the end of it, found themselves and are blossoming. It's important we send people with potential to the RYLA experience — not the highfliers, because they're going to fly high anyway. It's the people we have the potential to develop.

I'm also a great believer in Rotary Youth Exchange. I'm delighted that we are now in a position to reignite the

Youth Exchange programme. Just over the past few weeks, I've seen young people flying all around the world for what will be a life-changing experience. That comes back to the whole issue of creating a more peaceful world. Because if we can take young people and let them meet other young people and live in other cultures for a year, then we realise that basically we're all the same people. There is no need for conflict because we're all trying to pull in the same direction, and we all desire the same thing.

**Rotary keeps creating new partnerships and launching new projects. How can we ensure continuity as one president takes over from another?**

Marissa De Luna, Rotary Club of Sweetwater San Diego, California

When I talk about continuity, I don't just mean doing the same

old things year after year after year. What I mean is a process of continually moving forward, continually improving. To do that, we need to be looking at different projects and at different initiatives, because at any given time, there are different needs and different demands being placed on us. So I don't think the two are mutually exclusive. I think we can be part of new projects, and we can look at doing new things. But we can still be practising continuity, in that we're taking it forward in the long term and not rushing to conclude things in the space of any one presidential term.

**What is the biggest potential you see in Rotary as an organisation that has not been fully realised?**

Claudia Arizmendi, Rotary Club of Hermosillo Milenio, Mexico

We saw a great increase in volunteerism during the pandemic. I think we have a great opportunity to connect with those people and encourage them to carry on volunteering through Rotary. I believe it's in everybody's nature to care for other people. If we can bring that out of people, and if we can build on the spirit of care that we saw during the pandemic, what a wonderful legacy. About 6.5 million people died as a result of Covid around the world, and so they must not die in vain. If we can connect with the people who reignited their spirit of volunteering during that period, then we will have achieved something.

Pictures by Kevin Serna

Reproduced from *Rotary*



## A Health ATM in Bareilly



**R**C Bareilly Heights, RID 3110, installed a 'Health ATM' at the Community Health Centre at Bithri Chainpur near Bareilly. It was inaugurated by district magistrate Shivakant Dwivedi in the presence of PDGs Ravi Prakash Agarwal, Dinesh Goel and Vinay Krishnan.

The digital machine, manufactured by Hindustan Antibiotics, gives an all-round synopsis of a person's health by measuring more than 50 parameters including vital indicators such as blood pressure, glucose, body temperature, pulse, SPO2, oxygen saturation, body mass index, muscle/bone mass and eye vision. It can also detect malaria, dengue, Covid and typhoid.

The device saves the entire hassle of going to a doctor first when people can get a reality check and become aware of their health condition within no time, says club president Mohit Tandon. The health records are stored on the cloud and can be easily accessed by doctors. ■



# Nagpur Rotarians work for tribal welfare

Rasheeda Bhagat

Ritika Singhvi, RC Nagpur Vision president Shivani Sule and Swati Belkhade distributing saris to women in Melghat village.



**W**hen Rotary Club of Nagpur Vision, RID 3030, got a suggestion that the club work with a local NGO to do a service project involving mainly some surgeries in a few villages of Melghat, a hilly forest area in the Satpura mountain ranges, about 300km from Nagpur, club president Dr Shivani Sule, an ophthalmologist, grabbed the opportunity.

The tribals in this area are very laid back and in this region of Maharashtra, there is a lot of



malnutrition, and maternal and infant mortality numbers are also rather high. A club member, an eye surgeon himself, Dr Rajesh Singhvi, was associated with a doctor couple — Dr Kavita and Dr Ashish Satav who have formed an NGO, the MAHAN Trust, and were working for tribals in this belt. He suggested to the club president that the club should do a joint programme with this trust to do some surgeries on the tribal patients who had little access to healthcare, recalls Dr Sule. “This idea was brought to me when I became president in July 2022, and we started planning for a mega health camp where operations could be done in this region, which can be reached after a six-hour drive.”

The planning began in right earnest. The club members learnt that the two doctors had virtually adopted four villages in Melghat and had set up some kind of a medical facility a few years ago in one of the villages and this had grown into a health facility with two operation theatres and five tables. “But only minor procedures were being done here, like minor repairs, suturing, and treatment for burns, which are quite common here. The trust also works on deaddiction as many of the tribals here are addicted to tobacco and mahua.”

Periodically Dr Rajesh Singhvi and his college mates were helping to do some operations here, but he suggested that Rotary do a major surgical camp for the villagers. Dr Sule says that her club has 196 members and many of them were so enthused with this project that they wanted to come for the camp, but as the accommodation was limited, not all of them could be taken. On Jan 27, Rotarians from this club, including many doctors and others they had roped in from the Lata Mangeskar Hospital, landed up for the camp. The

project cost was roughly ₹2 lakh, of which ₹1 lakh that was needed for the medical and surgical material, was donated by a single member and rest of the money was pitched in by other club members.

**O**n Jan 27, the team reached the spot of the medical camp where a makeshift theatre was set up. “As there was no place to stay at that spot we booked accommodation in two guest houses about 45 minutes away, and our medical director, Dr Rupeshri Bhoyar, a gynaecologist, persuaded some of her gynaec friends to join the team.

Soon an operation theatre was set up by the medical team, and 18 doctors, including four from the club joined the camp.

A team of 18 doctors performed 52 surgeries out of which 32 were major surgeries; “doing six vaginal hysterectomies in a day and that too in a camp setting was a major feat! Dr Ashish and Kavita Satav from MAHAN, along with their team at the hospital, helped with the logistics and infrastructure support and identified the patients from

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There was a long queue of anxious patients and relatives, but they all had hope and faith in their hearts.

The entire team justified their trust by tirelessly, and successfully conducting the surgeries non-stop.

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**Dr Shivani Sule**  
president, RC Nagpur Vision

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surrounding villages for various surgeries. “During the camp, the premises saw a long queue of anxious patients and relatives, but they all had hope and faith in their hearts, and I am happy to share that the entire team justified their trust by tirelessly, and successfully conducting the surgeries non-stop,” added Sule.

But she and her club members are most happy about the “icing on the cake which was non-medical activities for the children at the villages. Various sports activities, distribution of sarees sponsored by our member Sneha Parikh, the prizes to the winning teams and goodie bags to all the children, made the project complete.”

The children enthralled the audience with their talent at games like kabaddi, kho kho and volleyball. This part was coordinated by the director of community services, Sandeep Duragkar. Sule thanked her club secretary Ritika Singhvi for the hard work she put in and the generosity and efforts of members Aarouni Verma, Farnberg Bharucha, Swati Belkhade, Madhumati

**Children playing kabaddi in the village.**



**Sports kits being distributed after a kabaddi match.**







The organisers, surgeons, anaesthesiologists and staff of the MAHAN Trust and hospital.



Dr Kavita Satav addressing the villagers during the surgical camp.



A surgery in progress at the OT in the medical camp.

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We definitely want to continue our association with these tribal villages and will strive to make each of our projects bigger every time.

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Dhawad, Chirag Singhvi and Jaishree Chhabrani for the success of the Melghat camp.

So what next, I ask Sule. “Oh, we definitely want to continue our association with these tribal villages and will strive to make each of our projects bigger every time,” says the excited woman. More surgical camps are definitely on their list and in March or April this year, the club plans to conduct a camp focused on eye surgery, where some 80-odd cataract operations will be done.

For the children of course more goodies are in store. For instance, the Rotarians noticed that not all the kids who played the games had t-shirts or footwear and they kept borrowing these from one another as their turn at the game came. So the next time, these items will be gifted to the children. The energy drinks sent by the Indian Academy of Paediatricians were lapped up by the tribal children, so more of these are in the pipeline too.

One lesson learnt is giving the children what they want and are familiar with. For instance, points out Sule, “We went with an entire cricket kit, a volleyball, football, basketball etc, but we now realise that they are more keen on kabaddi and volleyball. So next time we will concentrate on these sports.” ■



# Education for Warkari children

Jaishree

**T**he Warkari bhakti movement has been part of Hindu culture in Maharashtra

since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It includes worship of Vithoba, identified with Krishna at the ancient temple in Pandharpur.

A pilgrimage (referred to as *wari*) to the temple culminating on the Ekadashi day in the Hindu month of *Ashada* (June-July) is the

peak religious occasion for the Warkaris. Millions of devotees from across Maharashtra and northern Karnataka join the *palkis* (palanquin) taken on a procession by the Warkaris from Alandi (associated with Sant Dnyaneshwar) and Dehu (with Sant Tukaram), to reach the Pandharpur Vithoba temple on the Ekadashi day.

The children of this religiously inclined community are also groomed to follow the tradition from a young age. Greater emphasis is laid on learning bhajans, sangeet and musical instruments at residential 'sansthas'. But they do attend the local zilla parishad schools for formal education. To improve their learning experience the Doorstep School, a Pune-based NGO, is offering after-school classes in functional reading, writing and arithmetic on the school premises.

In December RC Pune Sports City, RID 3131, tied up with the NGO to support the training of 25 teachers in Alandi. They will, in turn, impart functional literacy to 150 students of the Warkari community. "Nitin Karia, a long-standing donor and well-wisher of our club has donated ₹6 lakh to our trust for this project," says club member Sandesh Savant.

The teachers are trained to teach lessons in



Rajani Paranjpe (L), founder of Doorstep School, interacting with a child as philanthropist Nitin Karia observes the class in progress.

basic hygiene, nutrition, sanitation and interactive skills for the students, besides the functional literacy classes. “The children will undergo 120 sessions over six months. By then, they will be well-versed in Marathi reading, writing and basic numeric operations such as addition, subtraction, division and multiplication,” he says. Each session will be for 90 minutes. “The classes may not be regular because the children would also have to participate in festivals and other rituals as part of the tradition. They have to balance academics with their daily rituals and their day starts as early as 4am,” adds Savant.

The Covid pandemic and its aftermath has affected the children’s learning abilities. Many of them are lagging behind

and show disinterest in academics, he explains. “It is however heartening to see that they look forward to these sessions as they provide personal attention to each child.” The club members visit the sessions from time-to-time and engage the children in fun activities.

Fifty students aged 9–14 are undergoing these classes presently in Alandi. They are divided into groups being handled by 14 specially trained teachers. Flash cards and other teaching aids are used to increase the learning impact.

The club has plans to continue the project with the help of a GG with international partner, RC Douai-Sud, France. “We have earlier executed a couple of Happy School projects with them,” says Savant.



Children learn to read and write in Hindi at one of the classes.

Club president Kennedy Samuel, Brij Sethi and the club’s literacy committee chair Mona Savant are deeply committed to this project. The sessions will be a

hugely beneficial as it provides holistic lessons to the children and sustains their interest in academics especially during their formative years, notes Samuel. ■

## Nashik Interactors clean a temple complex



Interactors collecting garbage at the temple complex.

More than 15 members of Interact Club of Wisdom High International School and Junior College, sponsored by RC Nasik, RID 3030, collected 25 bags of garbage during a cleanliness drive organised at the Someshwar temple in the city. The bags were then picked up by the solid waste management division of the Nashik municipal corporation.

The temple receives several footfalls every day and it is pathetic to see garbage strewn everywhere across the complex, although dustbins have been placed in prominent spots, says Vinayak Deodhar, member of the parent club.

The Interactors later interacted with the devotees and gently prodded them to throw garbage into the dustbins. ■



# Rotary must connect with the public

V Muthukumaran

**H**ave you connected your friends and relatives to Rotary, and more importantly, do you connect with your club members and other Rotarians across districts, asked RI director Elizabeth Usovicz, and chairperson of RI Board's executive committee, addressing RID 3232's discon *Sarvam*.

The future of Rotary is linked to DEI (diversity, equity and inclusivity), service above self, fellowship and integrity. "We need to build deep relationships among ourselves and with the public as part of branding and creating public image," she said.

The conference included a Rotary Project Fair with 130 stalls to facilitate partnerships between the government, NGOs, corporates and Rotary clubs across the seven focus areas of action, Elizabeth said. "I will carry

my experience at the inauguration of the project fair to North America and spread the message of sustainability and wellness across the clubs in my country," she added.

Usovicz said this was her first visit to India, and "for the first time I am wearing a saree, the symbol of Indian welcome and hospitality," she said, complimenting the 7,000-plus Rotarians across 174 clubs in RID 3232 for "being strong, vibrant and having many women as AGs and club presidents."

In his speech on membership growth, RI director Mahesh Kotbagi said, "we are 1.4 million people of action, including 200,000 Rotaractors, in more than 46,000 clubs working together to make positive change in the world." Rotaract was elevated as a member of RI, and one must appreciate the unique experience it provides, and



**Above:** DG Nandakumar felicitates RID Elizabeth Usovicz in the presence of (from L) PDGs ISAK Nazar and G Chandramohan, Sumedha, Discon chair M Ambalavanan, RIDE Roychowdhury and PDG S Muthupalaniappan.



DG N Nandakumar presents a memento to The Art of Living founder Ravi Shankar in the presence of (from L) Sumedha, RIDs Elizabeth Usovicz and AS Venkatesh, and RIDE Anirudha Roychowdhury.



the value it adds to the lives of young leaders, he said.

Quoting RI President Jennifer Jones, he said that the comfort and care of “our members is the greatest driver of member satisfaction and our most powerful tool to keep members engaged in their clubs. There is so much each of us can do to help create club experiences that are welcoming, inclusive, and enjoyable.” The five priority areas of action — “membership experience, the DEI principle, expanding reach, participants’ engagement and offering new experiences by chartering new format and cause-based clubs that are flexible to suit everyone are the way forward.”

### Next big corporate project

Addressing the meet, RIDE Anirudha Roychowdhury said, “over the last three decades we have identified a set of new challenges and priorities based on which RI leadership came out with a bold vision statement: *Together, we see a world where people unite and*

*take action to create lasting change*, along with a strategic action plan to arrest declining membership and make the clubs adapt to be relevant to changing times.”

While RI’s quest to eradicate polio was well documented, “we have to identify the next big corporate project that will attract new members in Western countries which are facing a steep decline in numbers as they have done away with polio in 1994. They now need a big global programme to stay relevant.” Also, membership is extremely important. “To sustain membership, we are trying with new format clubs, corporate, cause-based and e-clubs to attract young, diverse members,” he added.

Unlike other discons, Sarvam is also holding a sustainability and wellness expo, along with a Rotary project fair, which will pave the way for partnerships with the government and other stakeholders, said DG N Nandakumar. “We will partner with

The Art of Living Foundation having a large volunteer base for doing a number of projects across the focus areas of Rotary and avenues of service,” he said. “Leadership is a continuous process and as district governor I will proactively engage with all the Rotarians in the district,” he said. On March 19, a Sufi music concert by composer AR Rahman will be conducted as a fundraiser by RID 3232, he said.

Earlier, The Art of Living founder Ravi Shankar, after inaugurating the discon said, “service is the highest expression of human nature. If only people in the world are engaged in some form of service or other useful activities, there will be much less violence and conflict in the world.” Pointing out the growing cases of depression and anxiety in our world, he said, as human beings we should not allow others to take their lives. “There are stress and tensions in our societies. But we have to strive for a violence-free world, disease-free body and confusion-free mind.”



Of late, GoI has started to give importance to mental health. In the US already, there are 108 universities offering courses on mental wellness, while the American Congress pays for its government staff and workers to attend workshop on meditation, Ravi Shankar said.

Expressing his happiness over the MoU with RID 3232 for joint projects in combatting depression and anxiety, he said Rotary clubs must join “our volunteers in river restoration projects.” He cited the work of AoL volunteers who had rejuvenated Naganadhi river that flows from Tiruvannamalai through Vellore and merges into the Palar river in Kancheepuram. It had completely dried up over 20 years ago, “but two years ago, we made it a flowing river all through the year with the cooperation of the people.”

At a panel discussion, moderated by PDG R Ganapathi, on CSR grants for Rotary projects, industry honchos urged the NGOs to connect with the trade chambers. Calling for Rotary and industry to work together, the panellists — Kamal Bali, MD, Volvo India; P Pradeep Kumar, chairman, Karnataka Bank; M Murali, MD Shriram Properties; and V Nagappan, president, Hindustan Chamber of Commerce — noted that there was an unused CSR amount of ₹25,000 crore last year alone and “this was mainly due to the lack of ‘connect bandwidth’ between industry and the NGOs.” Hence, there is a need for constant networking, they said.

### Sustainability, wellness

Rotary clubs must join hands with the district forest officers (DFOs) in the 38 revenue districts of Tamil Nadu to grow nurseries and native saplings to help the state achieve its Green TN Mission of increasing its green cover from 23.7 per cent to the national average of 33 per cent in the next 10 years, said Supriya



Sahu, additional chief secretary, environment, Tamil Nadu government. “In the first year, we have already planted 2.8 crore trees across the state.”

Addressing the Sarvam Expo on health, wellness and sustainability, she recalled that Tamil Nadu was the “first state to conduct a mega sustainability expo with the support of TN Pollution Control Board in September last year.” That exhibition had over 200 stalls promoting eco-friendly products. “TN was also the first in the country to ban 14 types of plastics in 2018, and this was followed by other states after a few years,” she said.

TN Wetland and Climate Change Missions have goals to restore around 100 wetlands in five years and increase the installed renewable, green energy from 51 per cent, the highest in the country, to over 60 per cent capacity in the next few years. “Our state is the leader in the generation of solar and wind energy. If forests are our lungs, then wetlands are our kidneys as they filter out the pollutants and restore the environment by fixing the carbon,” explained Sahu. After the restoration of the Pallikaranai marsh in Chennai by creating an eco-park that has a walkers’ track, “around 15,000 people



including elders and disabled visit it each month for fresh air,” she said.

Following the success story of Odanthurai village in Coimbatore after the then panchayat president R Shanmugam had set up a community windmill to generate power for the houses, the TN government has adopted 10 villages to make them ‘climate smart’. The village now sells the surplus power to the state grid and has plans to generate solar power too. “At the model villages, we will have water treated and recycled, no plastic will be



#### Clockwise from top

DG Nandakumar presents the Distinguished Service Award to Dr MR Rajasekar in the presence of Dr Sanjay Kandasamy; RIDE Roychowdhury honoured by DGE Ravi Raman in the presence of DG Nandakumar and PDG S Krishnaswami; RID Mahesh Kotbagi being honoured by DG Nandakumar and Sumedha.

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We need to build deep relationships among ourselves and with the public as part of branding and creating public image.

**Elizabeth Usovicz**  
RI director

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used, children will be educated on eco-friendly life, and only green energy will be used,” Sahu added.

Discon chair M Ambalavanan said for the first time a Rotary fair was open to the public. “Sarvam Expo is my dream come true as I wanted to hold it along with the discon. But only eight clubs are showcasing their projects. From next year, we want at least 100 clubs to put up their stalls,” he said. DG Nandakumar urged Rotarians to spread the message of sustainability to change the mindset of the people.

Krishnan Sadagopan, senior vice-president, Ashok Leyland, stressed the need to decarbonise India’s power grid by diversifying into clean, green renewables such as solar, wind and ethanol mix. As the Earth gets warmer

due to climate change, its harmful impacts will be felt in the communities. “We need many innovations such as green hydrogen engine and biofuel for ease of living, access to non-fossil energy which the GoI has understood as it is taking up a number of initiatives,” he added. Sarvam Expo chair Jaishankar Unnithan welcomed the participants.

#### Discon awards

Receiving the Distinguished Service Award for the first successful liver transplant in India and other critical, high-risk surgeries, Dr MR Rajasekar, a transplant surgeon, said, “I am really honoured to receive the Rotary award, in fact the first public recognition for the liver transplant I have done.” He recalled the contribution of his wife Dr Vasudha, a Rotarian, and the support of his son, as well as “my teachers who have shared their knowledge with me.”

The award citation said he has done over 2,000 kidney and over 650 liver transplants and 700-plus laparoscopic surgeries. He set up India’s first liver transplant unit and an ICU in Delhi, on the lines of those in the University of Chicago, where he was trained.

As a 20-month-old, sick child Sanjay Kandasamy got a rebirth in 1998 with a successful liver transplant by Dr Rajasekar, at the Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Delhi. Now, after a gap of 25 years, the transplantee who has become a doctor, shared the Rotary podium with Dr Rajasekar as both were felicitated.

Rotary’s Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented to playback singer K S Chitra and AP MedTech Zone CEO Jitendra Sharma. Film producer and actress Suhasini Maniratnam presented the Significant Achievement Award to Feedback Foundation CEO Ajay Sinha for working towards sustainable social change with over 50 professionals to meet global development objectives.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran



**Pawan & Prachi Agarwal**  
District Governor & First Lady



# District 3110

## Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA)



## CSR Projects

**PROJECT 1:** Under the 9th CSR Project of the District, the corporate donor contributed Rs 47.77 Lacs towards the surgeries of 35 children suffering from Congenital Heart Disease (CHD). These surgeries will be performed on the needy children from economically weaker section of society from 26 cities of our District 3110 at Shri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital, Palwal (Haryana).

**PROJECT 2:** Under the 10th CSR Project of the District, the M/S Kashi Vishwanath Textile Mills (P) Ltd. contributed Rs 20.52 Lacs towards the surgeries of 15 children suffering from Congenital Heart Disease (CHD). These surgeries will be performed on the needy children satisfying following criteria, at Shri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital, Palwal (Haryana):

- a) Children from a family of Armed Forces Personnel (including BSF, CISF and CRPF)
- b) Children from Indian Border Areas Cities (India-Pakistan Border, India-China Border)
- c) Children of Uttarakhand State.



## TRF Symposium (Zone 6) at Kathmandu





## Inauguration of 4 CSR Projects

Inauguration of 4 CSR Projects worth Rs 1.57 Crores by RID A.S. Venkatesh at Kashipur



CATARACT OPERATION



WOOLLEN CLOTH DISTRIBUTION



BLANKETS DISTRIBUTION



FOOD DISTRIBUTION



BLOOD DONATION CAMP



BREAST CANCER AWARENESS PROGRAM



# Antenatal healthcare for rural women

Kiran Zehra

**A**t Sindhalchi Wadi, a village in Maharashtra, pregnant Adivasi women were throwing away the iron and folic acid (IFA) tablets provided to them at regular antenatal camps conducted by RC Panvel Elite, RID 3131. “It was an absolute shock. They believed that the pills would increase the baby’s weight and that they will not be able to have a normal delivery. Also, they were scared that a child born through an operation will be weak and may have some defects,” says Dr Swathi Likhite, club president.

The club stumbled upon this information when it conducted multiple paediatric health camps across 13 villages near Mumbai. The camp collected a database of over 1,000 children below 12 years with poor haemoglobin. The club president, who is also a paediatrician, conducted further research only to find that “worms were the main reason for the poor haemoglobin levels and a compromised immune system leading to the bad health of these children.” A deworming drive was conducted for over 1,000 children. The club then decided

to conduct antenatal camps: “We learned that 90 per cent of the pregnant women were anaemic.” They were given IFA tablets but even over a course of two months “there was no improvement. When we probed, we found that none of them were taking the tablets.”

The ASHA workers were “doing their best and encouraging these women to come to the nearest PHC and get their regular check-up done. They also create awareness on the consumption of IFA and the adverse consequences of not taking the pills. But this was not enough, says the club president. “Only very few women want to follow all the guidelines and take the prescribed medicines. But they were discouraged by the elderly women in the village. We were fighting a taboo and the only way we could make a difference was by creating awareness.”

The club conducted talks to help women understand the benefits

Women from the villages participate in a talk to understand the benefits of iron and folic acid tablets.





Children display their new notebooks donated by RC Panvel Elite.

of IFA. “Pregnant women need 27 milligrams of iron per day, compared to 18 milligrams for non-expecting adult women (19 to 50 years old). We showed them case studies and explained to them that unlike what they believed, these tablets help in the prevention of congenital malformations. We also elaborated on the role IFA plays in immune function for the baby, osteoporosis prevention and hearing loss.”

Slowly but steadily the women began to take the pills. Improved

results “encouraged us to get more involved. We are building an RCC team and this will help us understand the unique challenges women in these rural communities face.”

The club is conducting regular oral check-up camps, yoga classes, and *Good Touch and Bad Touch* sessions for the children, alongside nutritional awareness, healthy recipe classes, and personal hygiene for pregnant women in the villages.

“The antenatal camps are close to my heart,” says Swathi and adds

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The antenatal camps are close to my heart. This initiative has given me an opportunity to meet and develop meaningful relationships with people and develop a deeper understanding of what our community wants.

**Dr Swathi Likhite**  
president, RC Panvel Elite

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Club president Dr Swathi Likhite (left) administering a typhoid vaccination to a child.

that this initiative has given her an “opportunity to meet and develop meaningful relationships with people and a deeper understanding of what our community wants.”

The club has also carried out a typhoid vaccination drive where 800 government school students were vaccinated. The total cost was ₹56,000. Recently over 750 adults were given hepatitis B vaccinations at the cost of ₹45,000. The club has so far carried out 132 medical service projects, RYLAs for 1,500 students and distributed four digital learning kits in government schools. ■



# RC Kodaikanal celebrates 50 years

Jaishree

**R**otary Club of Kodaikanal, RID 3000, celebrated its golden jubilee year by setting up a Rotary Study Centre at a 100-year-old government school in the hill town to provide extra lessons for underprivileged students from various schools and coach youngsters to face various competitive exams with confidence. The club is also arranging career guidance programmes to enable higher secondary class students to choose their course of study for better employment opportunities.

A football tournament, silambam competition, and several other contests were held to mark the club's milestone year. Over 1,700 students participated and more than 400 children won prizes in these events.

Begun in 1973 with 18 members — mostly foreigners settled in the hills — the club now has 54 members, including eight women Rotarians. Its predominant focus has been on improving infrastructure in schools, including construction of toilet blocks and providing classroom furniture, says club president MRPA Karthikeyan.



This year, as part of the commemoration “we distributed ₹2 lakh worth medical aid to needy patients and educational

**Below:** RC Kodaikanal members celebrate the club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with DG I Jerald, PDG Sam Babu and RC Kodaikanal president MRPA Karthikeyan.







**Above:** Prizes being distributed to winners of a competition.

scholarships to students,” he adds.

The club has been organising RYLA every year since 2015. This year 60 students participated in a three-day RYLA. An orphanage at Perungadu, a tribal village, is being supported by the club since 2018. “We regularly provide grocery and other essential items, and dresses to the 27 children residing there,” says Karthikeyan. He recalls the club providing solar lights to Valangavi village in 2017. “It is a tribal hamlet 40 miles from Kodaikanal and with limited facilities. When we first visited it, we were appalled to see the place plunged in darkness and that prompted us to equip the homes with solar lamps and instal solar street lights there.”

The club has chartered eight Interact clubs and three Rotaract clubs. PDG Sam Babu is a member of this club. ■



**From R:** Corey Stixrud, principal, Kodaikanal International School, and DG Jerald inaugurating the Rotary Study Centre in the presence of club president Karthikeyan and PDG Sam Babu.



# All-women's car rally breaks shackles

V Muthukumaran

An all-women's Rotary club in Chennai has dared to be different. Their signature project — *Viriyum Siragugal* (spreading the wings) — a cross-country car rally with four members, has completed its fourth edition with a Kanyakumari to Kashmir journey. “The expedition was both eventful and joyful with great memories as we got splendid receptions from 150 clubs at 45 places across 15 RI districts,” says project chair Sivabala Rajendran, charter president, RC Chennai Meraki, RID 3232.

The 15-day solo rally coursed through 5,500km of challenging terrain and inclement weather, “but mother nature helped us to make our travel smooth without any hitch. We had no mechanical glitches with our car, and our health was so good

that we enjoyed every moment of the changing landscape,” she recalls. To align with the RI president's theme, the car rally had a tagline ‘Imagine Impact Tour’ and the women crew noted down all the club projects and community initiatives they had visited along the way “so that we could spread the word around to enhance the public image of Rotary across the country,” she says.

RI director AS Venkatesh and DG N Nandakumar flagged off the rally in the presence of event patron Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti, a Chennai textile baron, on Sep 29. They reached Kanyakumari in the wee hours. On the next day, RID 3212 DG VR Muthu, along with other district officials, inaugurated the rally from the southern-most tip of India.

## Warned of risks

As this was the first time they were travelling across North India, “our families and few Rotarians were a bit apprehensive. But we convinced them that we are travelling as Rotarians, not as just women, and told them prior arrangements were done with clubs to take care of logistics and stay. After sensing our determination, they let us go,” explains Sivabala.

Project coordinator Kothangi Suchitra was on the wheel most of the time, and her supporting driver was club secretary Preetha Mahesh, while Sivabala and club president Shrikala Gopi were the other members of the quartet team. Go Green, End Polio Now, DEI policy, cancer awareness and women's welfare are the themes of the campaign they took up on their journey.



RI President Jennifer Jones is being given a picture of her receiving the rally team during the Rotary India Centennial event, Feb 2020, in Kolkata. To her left is RC Chennai Meraki charter president Sivabala Rajendran, with (from L) club secretary Preetha Mahesh, Kothangi Suchitra and club president Shrikala Gopi on the right at the Vizag Institute.



RI Director A S Venkatesh flags off the car rally, along with PDG Raja Seenivasan and Rtn Vinod Saraogi.

Some of the noteworthy projects they visited during the rally include the 400-bed Rotary Covid Hospital, Erode; Karunashraya, a palliative care centre in Bengaluru; the *Annapoorna Yojana*, offering food to the elderly and a school for the visually-impaired in Solapur; a municipal hospital with incubators and human milk bank in Pune; a blood bank offering free service to the poor in

Aurangabad; a vocational centre and school for special children in Khamgaon; a forest project in Akola; a deaf and dumb school in Amravati; a vocational centre in Chhindwara; and a vaccination centre and Rotary school in Jhansi.

“We carried the two ‘End Polio’ torches, an initiative of RC Madras that had passed around 63 countries, to get public support and they will be

sent to Afghanistan and Pakistan in its final leg,” says Sivabala.

### Never on road after 6pm

Having networked with clubs well before their rally, “we routinely halted at 6pm at places where a reception was arranged by Rotarians. We were taken around their projects and a comfortable stay was provided by the clubs,” says Suchitra. Recalling a nightmare when the Google Maps misguided them to a remote village on the way to Gwalior from Jhansi, she says, “as it is a straight highway, we went by the GPS indices. But it led us to a tribal hamlet... it was scary. But we got a peek into their farming and primitive life.”

In Jammu, they were received by DG Dushyant Choudhary, RID 3070, and other Rotarians on Oct 13 and reached Srinagar the next day. In the valley, RC Srinagar City secretary Safoora Javed and her family hosted the rally-ists; while the club president Bhupinder Singh was present in Jammu along with the DG. Driving from Jammu to Srinagar, a distance of 250km, on steep mountains with minimal roads, gave them a big scare. “Unlike hill roads in South India where there are retaining



From L: Sivabala, Preetha, RI Director Mahesh Kotbagi, Suchitra and Shrikala with their raised palms to indicate their five-fold rally campaign.





The rallyists being flagged off by Nalli Kuppuswami Chetti, DG N Nandakumar, Vinod Saraogi and PDG Raja Seenivasan.

walls from the gorges, in Kashmir there are no such safety or road standards. While trucks are coming from the opposite side, we have to negotiate well as there are no retaining walls (parapet) on the left facing the valley," she says. Except in Kashmir, the rest of the national highways are of high standards, opines Suchitra. A gratifying experience has been the reception given by 10 district governors who were accompanied by PDGs, club presidents and DGs-elect during their pitstops.

### Chennai to Vizag

The four-member crew had their fifth expedition from Chennai to Visakhapatnam, an 850km journey by

car, to take part in the Visakha Vista zone institute. "RI President Jennifer Jones encouraged us at the *Women in Rotary* programme. She took a selfie with us and it was a defining moment for us," says Sivabala. On the way to Vizag, they were hosted by Rotarians from RCs Sulpurpet, Kavali and Tuni.

In their maiden rally in 2018, the quartet drove from Chennai to Dhanushkodi, a ruined island off Rameswaram. Then RI president Barry Rassin flagged off the rally in the presence of then RI director C Basker and incoming directors Bharat Pandya and Kamal Sanghvi. This was followed by a Chennai to Kolkata jaunt to participate in Rotary India's centenary

celebrations. After the pandemic, in 2021–22, they drove along the Cauvery River starting from Talacauvery in Kodagu district of Karnataka to Poompuhar in Tamil Nadu where it merges into the Bay of Bengal. "River restoration, reforestation and saving environment were taken up as campaign issues," she adds.

One of the cherished moments was RI director Mahesh Kotbagi and Amita hosting them in Pune for over an hour during their KK to Kashmir journey. Rally advisor PDGs R Srinivasan and EK Sagadhevan, its coordinator, were the architects of the successful solo car expedition by the women Rotarians from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. ■

### Rallyists at the Bidar Fort in Karnataka along with members of local clubs and Inner Wheel Club of Bidar.



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## Rotary Orphanage Olympics at Mangalore

### Team Rotary News

It was day-long fun and merriment for 400 children from 10 childcare homes and protection centres at 22<sup>nd</sup> Chinnara Utsava, more popular as Orphanage Olympics, hosted jointly by RC Mangalore Central, RID 3181, and RAC Mangalore City, at the Canara High School.

The annual sports and cultural meet extends a platform to deprived children at orphanages and special homes to showcase their talent to a large gathering. In his address as chief guest, Mangalore University vice-chancellor PS Yedapadithaya praised Rotary for giving an opportunity to less

privileged children from special homes to display their skills. He also appreciated the community projects and social initiatives of the club, done over the years. “Voluntary organisations must strive hard to eliminate social inequality and backwardness in society by holding similar events,” he said.

Organising committee chair PDG Devdas Rai said the aim of the event is to bring smiles on the faces of children “at least for a day and give them the feeling that they are not alone.” Earlier, RC Mangalore Central president Sai Baba Rao gave the welcome speech. AG Rajgopal Rai, president-elect



PDG Devdas Rai (third from R) with children at the inauguration of the Orphanage Olympics.

Rajesh Shetty and club secretary Pradeep Kulal were also present. DGN Vikram Datta distributed prizes and certificates to the winners and the event trophy to the winning team. ■



# President Jones attends several programmes in Sri Lanka

## Team Rotary News

**D**uring her recent visit to Sri Lanka, RI President Jennifer Jones addressed a large gathering of Rotarians in the island nation and attended a black tie dinner organised in her honour. The grand event was attended by some 400 guests, including the President of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremasinghe and his wife Maithree.

Among the several service projects done by the Sri Lankan clubs that Jones visited, a token tree planting was done by her to mark the *One Million Trees Stories* of Rotary Sri Lanka. “Under this one million trees programme, Rotary Sri Lanka not only targets to improve the green cover of our country, but also donate 40 per cent of the income derived from it to The Rotary Foundation. Jennifer Jones planted a token tree on the premises of the Colombo Stock Exchange,” said PRIP KR Ravindran.

He added that the Colombo Stock Exchange, in collaboration with Rotary, Sri Lanka Institute of Directors and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, organised this event as a call to action for environmental sustainability.

Another project in which the RI president participated was

the *Life Line Project*, in which UNICEF and RI are partnering to deliver critical lifesaving supplies to families impacted by the present crisis in Sri Lanka. The partnership synergises Rotary International’s global network that will raise funds to procure essential medicines. The first consignment of medicines was handed over by President Jones to the Ministry of Health.

*Jump Start Sri Lanka* is another service project that Rotary in Sri Lanka is doing in partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. Under this project 500 deserving youngsters in the country are offered an IT scholarship which is initiated and developed in collaboration with Rotary clubs in the Philippines. The first batch of 50 students were presented the IT scholarship letter of award by Jones during her visit to Sri Lanka.

A high point of the RI president’s visit was the postal department of Sri Lanka launching a commemorative stamp to mark the visit of the first woman Rotary president, in the presence of Bandula Gunawardana, minister of mass media. ■



**Above:** RI President Jennifer Jones and DGN Nick Krayacich with Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremasinghe at the Rotary banquet.

**Right:** President Jones with UNICEF representative Christian Skoog handing over a consignment of medicines to the Sri Lankan health minister Keheliya Rambukwella. They are flanked by PRIP KR Ravindran, DG Pubudu De Zoysa, RID Vicki Puliz, PRID Sangkoo Yun, RC Dubai Cosmopolitan president David Gibson-Moore and others.



Sri Lankan mass media minister Bandula Gunawardana releasing a postage stamp with a picture of President Jones. Also seen are PRIP Ravindran, DG Pubudu, PDGs Bhashkumar Rajan, Gowri Rajan, Krish Rajendran and Ajith Weerasinghe.



President Jones, along with RID Puliz, plants a sapling on the lawns of the Colombo Stock Exchange. Also seen (from L): Gibson-Moore, Nick Krayacich, Rajeeva Bandaranayake, CEO of the stock exchange, PDG Gowri and DG Pubudu.





# Rotary Expo boosts local economy in Jalna

## Team Rotary News

**R**otary Jalna Expo, a three-day fair hosted jointly by RCs Jalna and Jalna Midtown, RID 3132, in December, generated a total business of ₹5 crore with over one lakh visitors.

Apart from boosting the local economy, small and medium enterprises, spreading a social message about the plastic menace, exposing young minds to the latest tech developments, both clubs raised a good amount of money from the mega exhibition. “The funds

raised will help us to hold social initiatives, which is the primary reason for this expo,” said Dhawal Mishrikotkar, president, RC Jalna Midtown. Spread over seven acres, the industrial expo had over 250 exhibitors including small and medium businesses, two product launches — Aprocool’s air conditioner and Vikram Tea’s Tea Tantra, demo stalls for children such as planetarium, mobile science lab, robotics, 3D printing, and an aeromodelling display that drew over 25,000 school students. One of the highlights is that a carpet stall made a business of over ₹10 lakh in three days and “even after the exhibition, people continued to throng this stall.”

Mercedes Benz India head Vyankatesh Kulkarni inaugurated the exhibition in the presence of Jalna district collector Vijay Rathod and DG Rukmesh Jakhotiya. Another feature is the ISRO Rocket Launcher Show, a tall edifice of 4,700 eco-bricks made from seven tonnes of plastic from landfills, thus sequestering around seven tonnes of Co2 from the environment. More than 15,000 students watched the planetarium show, robotics demo, and were awestruck by the Kids’ Gymnastics Talent sponsored by Aarya Contortion World with Rtn Pooja Rathi as its project chair.

Rotary Club of Jalna president Kishor Deshpande and secretary



Students in front of the ISRO Rocket Launcher stall.



**Mercedes Benz India head Vyankatesh Kulkarni inaugurates Rotary Jalna Expo in the presence of DG Rukmesh Jakhotiya.**

Prashant Mahajan coordinated with Mishrikotkar, Pratik Nanavati, president-elect, RC Jalna Midtown, and Rtn Yashraj Peety for the Rotary exhibition.

“It was a one-of-its-kind initiative that served Rotary’s core areas and benefited Jalna citizens, the local economy, aided the promotion of small and homegrown enterprises,

and enhanced the public image of Rotary,” said Mishrikotkar. RC Jalna initiated the exhibition in 2007 and followed it up with two more editions in 2011 and 2017. ■

## A Happy school in Guwahati

The junior section of the Government Higher Secondary School, Panbazar, Guwahati, after its renovation, looks “bright and clean. I like coming to school more now,” says Neerab, a Class 5 student. Under Rotary’s TEACH initiative, RC Guwahati Luit, RID 3240, through its trust, transformed the school “into a better place where children feel welcome to learn,” says club president Rajiv Jain.

A team headed by club member Amit Ajitsaria assessed the school’s needs. “We had to work on two dilapidated classrooms, two toilet blocks with no running water, and the terrace needed a parapet wall. To top it all, the school had no safe, hygienic drinking water,” said Mona Shah, the club’s Literacy chair.



DG Kushanava Pabi (fifth from R) with club members at the government school.

Within three months the club completed the project at ₹3.75 lakh. The classroom furniture was replaced and a water purifier and outdoor play equipment were installed. “Most importantly we made it a secure, attractive and happy learning place for students and teachers,” says Mona. DG Kushanava Pabi

inaugurated the Happy School in the presence of PDG Arijit Endow and club members. A training workshop for teachers was also organised and the club plans to charter an Interact club in the school.

Earlier, the club had renovated a toilet block with five toilets at the school as part of its WinS project. ■



# 4 CSR projects inaugurated in Kashipur

Team Rotary News



RI Director AS Venkatesh and Vinita with (from L) PDG Rajiv Sharma (RID 3030), DGN Neerav Nimesh, DG Pawan Agarwal, Prachi, PDG Sharat Chandra and Anjana at one of the Happy Schools in Kashipur.

In a mega CSR grant initiative, RI director AS Venkatesh inaugurated four projects executed by RC Kashipur, RID 3110, in the domains of Basic Education and Literacy; and Disease Prevention and Treatment at a total cost of ₹1.57 crore.

Noting the good work done by the club, he said, “the best part was the enthusiasm shown by the beneficiary organisations which shows that they are ready not only to use the upgraded facilities but also to maintain them.” Eight computer labs were set up at Vidya Bharti Schools in and around Kashipur with contribution of ₹25 lakh from Kashi Vishwanath Textile Mills. Venkatesh and Vinita inaugurated two labs at Chandravati Tiwari Junior School and Chandravati Tiwari Senior School.

CSR donors Galwalia Ispat Udyog and KVS Premier Foundation provided medical equipment to various departments at LD Bhatt Sub-District Hospital, Kashipur, at a total cost of ₹52.57 lakh. As part of this facelift, the three-bed NBSU (newborn stabilisation unit) was upgraded into a 12-bed SNCU (special newborn care unit) at this hospital. Venkatesh and Vinita inaugurated the new SNCU facility; and the newly-built labour room and the SNCU extension unit respectively. The SNCU room renovation and its extension was done by the Inner Wheel Club of Kashipur with contribution from Naini Papers. It is estimated that the CSR projects at the hospital will attract over 2,000 new patients in a year.

The club inaugurated three Happy Schools with the support of Naini Papers (₹79.79 lakh). The government schools had a complete makeover including renovation of classrooms, the campus, creation of gender segregated toilet blocks, new furniture, thematic wall paintings, brick-lined pathways, green lawns and fortified boundary walls.

In his speech, DG Pawan Agarwal said that 11 projects worth ₹7 crore are being done by RID 3110 this year. He felicitated Venkatesh and other dignitaries. PDGs Rajiv Sharma (RID 3030), Devendra Kumar Agarwal, Sharat Chandra, Ravi Prakash Agarwal, Kishor Katru, DGN Neerav Nimesh and RID 3110 CSR chair Lalesh Saxena were among those present at the project launch. Club president Udit Agarwal gave the vote of thanks. ■

## Pedalling their way for environment, water

### Team Rotary News

Over 550 Rotarians and people across age groups took part in *Cyclathon 2.0*, a mega cycle rally organised by RC Jalandhar Helping Hands, RID 3070, in a joint initiative with 13 other city clubs, sending a message of ‘pedal to save environment and water’.

The cycle rally toured 10km starting

from the Model Town and passed through different localities to spread awareness on the need to preserve the environment and save water. Veteran athletes and riders from Jalandhar — Gagan Kumar, Sunil Sharma, Balraj Singh Chouhan and Baljit Mahajan — were honoured at the end of the rally. All



DG Dushyant Choudhary (back row, centre, holding a certificate) with the cycle rallyists.

the cyclists were given t-shirts, certificates, medals, caps, calendars and refreshments.

DG Dushyant Choudhary, IPDG US Ghai, zonal chairman Maninder Singh Chadha,

AGs Rajesh Bahri, Naresh Chadha, PDGs Surender Seth, SPS Grover, club president Ruchi Singh Gaur, project director Nikhil Aneja and members from other clubs were present at the event. ■

### Convention 2023

## Only in Melbourne

### Eva Remijan — Toba

Take your pick of exclusive and private events planned for the RI Convention, highlighting Melbourne’s culture, sports and hospitality. Just-for-Rotary experiences include world-class golfing, special access to a waterfront restaurant district, and a convention favourite: dinner at a Rotary member’s home.

Golfers who get to town ahead of the May 27–31 convention can attend a Rotary day at Victoria Golf Club,



one of eight courses in the Melbourne Sandbelt, known for beautiful layouts on sandy soil ideal for the game. Proceeds from the outing (May 26) go to polio eradication. Visit another Melbourne treasure among Rotary friends during the Night at the Museum welcome cultural event (May 27). Explore Melbourne Museum after hours to learn about the city’s history, and catch up over regional food and drinks.

Rotary members who live throughout metropolitan Melbourne are ready to have fellow convention goers over for dinner. For Host Hospitality evening, you’ll attend a dinner (May 29) given by a member at home or by a club.

For another special evening meal, Rotary members get exclusive access to the South Wharf restaurant area (May 29–30) to taste the multitude of foods that draw visitors to the city. The Streets of Melbourne food exposition is just outside the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, one of the Rotary convention venues. Or book an evening outing (May 30) to the famed Flemington Racecourse, including three-course fine dining and photos with winning thoroughbreds. Reserve your exclusive excursion at [rotarymelbourne2023.org/events](https://rotarymelbourne2023.org/events).

Learn more and register at  
**[convention.rotary.org](https://convention.rotary.org)**.



# Meet your



**Talla Raja Sekhar Reddy**  
Chit fund, RC Narasaraopet, RID 3150

## Transforming rural Telangana

Every day is a motivation and learning experience for Raja Sekhar Reddy as “my clubs have taken up mega village betterment initiatives under *Project Grama Vikas*,” after doing a need assessment study in their adopted villages, he says. Happy Schools, upgrading PHCs, tree plantation drives, a no-plastic campaign, awareness on conserving water, soil test for farmers and agri experts mentoring farmers on growing profitable, sustainable crops, are some of the highlights of *Grama Vikas*.

At present, 64 clubs are into village development projects in a phased manner. “Most of the funding is through member contributions and donations from philanthropists who have migrated from these villages.” In a day, around 800 Rotarians are doing field trips to monitor village programmes. Existing amenities like burial grounds and community centres are being revamped, while new facilities like parks, walking tracks and cement benches are being created. A dialysis centre (10 machines) was set up at the St Joseph General Hospital, Guntur, with a CSR grant of ₹1.5 crore; while a colour doppler CT scan was installed at the MNJ Cancer Hospital, Hyderabad, with a grant of ₹46 lakh from BHEL-GE.

The two cancer screening buses, flagged off last year, have detected over 1,000 cases of cancer in patients at 85 special camps. His TRF-giving target is \$650,000. Among other initiatives, 1,500 bicycles were given to girl students and 600 sewing machines were donated to women. “Thanks to *Grama Vikas*, villages now seek Rotary’s help instead of politicians to meet their basic necessities,” he smiles.



**Vommina Sathish Babu**  
Tech education, RC Nellore South, RID 3160

## Demystifying GG process for clubs

In the history of RID 3160, hardly 6–7 global grant projects would have been done till now, estimates DG Vommina Sathish Babu whose family has been involved in Rotary service for around 70 years. “Lack of proper knowledge on the process of GG application and unawareness about the need to contribute big to TRF, in order to avail DDFs as matching amount, are the major hurdles,” he says.

Babu has set up a 19-member grants management team with a three-year tenure so that clubs can know more about the GG process. “The team members were trained through the e-learning centre of *rotary.org*.” Now they are out in the field doing community assessment to identify potential GG projects.

Through his initiative, cervical cancer equipment (GG: \$40,000) and neonatal diagnostic devices (\$33,000) were donated to two trust hospitals in Davangere.

Inspired by his father, Rtn Vommina Subramaniam, Babu joined Rotary in 1997. “My parents took me to a number of fellowship events and projects which impressed me as a child. My wife and two daughters are passionate Rotarians too. All my family members are Paul Harris Fellows.” Both he and his wife are major donors, and he is the first person in RID 3160 to create an endowment fund for \$25,000 named after his parents. His target for TRF giving is \$250,000 and he wants to start four cause-based and eight traditional clubs.

# Governors

V Muthukumaran



**Shrikant Balkrishna Indani**

Superstore chain, RC Dondaicha, RID 3060

## Project Gram Kalyan in 100 villages

Just being a member of the “one of the world’s largest service organisations and contributing to projects that change the lives of millions of people motivates me,” says DG Shrikant Indani. After finishing his college, he became a Rotaractor in 1997 and a Rotarian in 2006.

As DG, he has conceived *Gram Kalyan* project which strives to usher in “visible changes in the lives of villagers.” All the 105 clubs have adopted a village where multidisciplinary projects are taken up to provide clean drinking water, better education to children, access to medical services, and empowering women and girls. The ambitious *Gram Kalyan* projects are funded by a mix of member contributions, CSR and global grants.

From February, over 100 minor surgical camps are being conducted for about 10,000 patients, he says. His target for TRF giving is \$1.2 million, “but we are aiming to achieve \$1.5 million.” PRIIP Kalyan Bannerjee and PDG Ashish Ajmera are his role models in Rotary. “Both are down-to-earth and humble personalities, but they are towering leaders of Rotary India. And they still continue to do great service,” says Indani. After demitting office, “I want to continue my Rotary service under higher assignments at senior RI level.” He is confident of inducting 800 new members in this year.

Major clubs in RID 3060 have set up permanent projects, “which I call temples of humanity as they serve the communities throughout the year without any break,” he adds.



**P Saravanan**

Transport, RC Namakkal Poultry Town, RID 2982

## Rallies for public causes

The *Save Cauvery* rally in Feb last week will aim to stop the chemical effluents and other pollutants let into the river at Mettur and nearby villages. “We will create awareness on river pollution which is alarming and expect over 1,000 participants at this runathon,” says Saravanan.

Earlier, they held a walkathon in Hosur to focus on health-care; and a marathon in Salem with the support of local police to create awareness on drug menace. “Around 3,000 people across age groups ran in 5km and 10km categories ensuring good public image for us,” he says. He joined Rotary in 1990 at the age of 25 “drawn by the friendship, fellowship and service opportunities it offers us. Later on, I learnt that Rotarians strive to help the underprivileged by doing good through service projects.”

Five dialysis centres will be set up at government hospitals (GG: \$175,000) in a phased manner. “Already, our clubs are running dialysis centres at GHs in Salem, Hosur, Tiruchengode and Kumarapalayam. RC Namakkal has its own facility with five units.” Cervical and breast cancer detection equipment will be donated to 10 hospitals under *Project Malar* with a CSR grant of \$210,000. He aims to collect \$750,000 for TRF. All the 19 zones hold new member orientation sessions led by their AGs “so that we have committed Rotarians.” While the district RYLA in Jan had 62 Rotaractors and youth, RYLAs are being conducted at the zone and regional levels as an ongoing programme.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



# Connection is a cure

Dave King

Rotary clubs, experts and governments are tackling loneliness with meaningful interactions.

For Vera Cranmer and Sylvia Worden, two friends in their 80s, it's hard to overstate how much they look forward to their regular visits with the teenage students at a local college on England's south coast. "We savour these visits like reunions with long-lost friends," Sylvia says.

The women live independently in their homes in Chichester, a picturesque and vibrant cathedral city near the sea. But Sylvia, who once worked as a teacher there, was widowed a few years ago, and her outings in town are far less frequent. Vera, too, has had to cope with feelings of isolation.

Today, though, the two women are among a dozen elders, as they call themselves, having a lively discussion

about the royal family with the students at Chichester College. "I really enjoy the discussions with the young people. Some of them are so aspirational," says Sylvia. "I am probably one of the younger elders there, but I've made good friends with a lady who is 92. It's a great outlet for a lot of the older residents."

Vera, 88, agrees. "Sometimes I'm not sure if I want to go out, but when I come back home, I feel I've had a good morning. It's nice to meet other people like myself, but it's really nice to meet the youngsters, to see a different side and come back feeling positive." She once worked as an occupational therapist, specialising in caring for people with cerebral palsy. These days, she has difficulty walking and depends on the on-demand

minibus transport to get to the college. "I couldn't manage without it," she says.

*Bridging Generations*, a project organised by RC Chichester Priory, is tackling loneliness by connecting college students with older people. Every two weeks, a group of elders has coffee, cake, and a chat with students in the college canteen. Afterward, many elders stay for lunch cooked by catering students. The Rotary club pays for transport, while Chichester College provides the space and refreshments.

The costs are minimal, but the rewards plentiful. A 2018 report by the nonprofit organisations Generations United and the Eisner Foundation indicated that intergenerational programmes are particularly effective in fostering wellbeing. Among adults who participated in one such programme, 97 per cent reported that they benefited from the programme, with the vast majority saying they felt happy, loved and needed.

There are benefits for younger people too. For instance, Chichester College has invited students from across campus to take part in the *Bridging Generations* meetings, and the project has proved a valuable tool to build students' communication and interpersonal skills. "What has come across more than anything is the shared laughter and camaraderie, the feeling of being valued, listened to, and that you matter, whether you are 17 or 92 years old," says Rae Benn, who until recently helped facilitate the programme for the college.



For Vera Cranmer, the *Bridging Generations* gatherings are a reason to get out and enjoy people's company. "It's a good way to spend what could be a lonely day," she says.

*Bridging Generations* was the brain-child of Rotarian Mike Harvey, who approached Chichester College in 2013 with the idea. He recognises alleviating loneliness and isolation as a significant community challenge. The quest starts with identifying those who are on their own a lot of the time and willing to reach out and seek connection.

Harvey, a member of the Chichester Priory club, found participants by talking to community organisations such as Age UK and Health and Independent Living Support, which provides meals on wheels. “Others came to us through church leaders, sheltered housing, and our own contacts,” he says. “When it all comes together, seeing lonely people having good times, talking to students two or three generations below them, is so stimulating.”

Exacerbated by the Covid pandemic seclusion, loneliness has become a global public health crisis. In the US, even before the pandemic, a quarter of Americans aged 65 and older described themselves as socially isolated, including 4 per cent, or 1.3 million people, experiencing severe social isolation, according to a 2011 study. And loneliness doesn’t just affect older people. In Britain, 5 per cent of adults, or 2.6 million people, said in a government survey that they felt lonely “often” or “always” during a month in the pandemic’s early days in 2020.

Such is the concern in the UK that in 2018 the government appointed a minister for loneliness as part of a “Tackling Loneliness” strategy that has invested more than £50 million (about \$59 million) to work with a range of charitable partners.

Studies in Europe and the US link chronic loneliness to poor physical health and an increased risk of dementia, coronary heart disease and stroke. Researchers have likened loneliness to high blood pressure or smoking 15 cigarettes daily as a risk factor for premature

death. A well-known Harvard University study that tracked 724 people over their entire adult lives clearly determined social relationships as the best predictor of a person’s long-term physical and emotional wellbeing. The connection between poor physical health and loneliness is so evident that doctors in many countries have adopted “social prescribing” by routinely screening their patients for loneliness and directing them to activities within their communities.

Women are often found to report significantly more loneliness than men, though some researchers caution that the gender difference might be due to men being more reluctant to report undesir-

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able feelings such as loneliness. Additional risk factors for loneliness include mental illness and poor physical health.

In June 2022, the UK government published further research that demonstrated how mental health distress can play a significant role in the onset and continuation of chronic loneliness. The report also suggests a solution: targeted early intervention. “People experiencing chronic loneliness were shown in our study to be nearly four times more likely than people without chronic loneliness to be in mental distress,” explains Sokratis Dinos, co-director of health and social care at the London-based National Centre for Social Research. “Poor mental health can lead to difficulties connecting with others, social withdrawal and loneliness, while loneliness can equally contribute to poor mental health.”

Ministers in the British government came together to draw up a revised strategic plan for targeted intervention to be published early this year, supported by £750 million (about \$895 million) for a charity funding package.

Since Rotary’s founding purpose is for people from different backgrounds to exchange ideas and form meaningful, lifelong friendships, Rotary clubs are a natural antidote for loneliness. They offer connections plus closer engagement with the wider community. Researchers suggest that the quality of relationships, not the quantity, matters most. Rotary provides a sense of purpose and meaning, accompanied by the personal payback of greater self-worth.

At the beginning of the Covid pandemic, when in-person meetings were curtailed, Rotary members kept connecting with older and disabled people through phone calls, running errands for them, picking up prescriptions, and even walking their dogs.

Lisa Hunter, a member of the Rotary Club of Maidenhead Bridge, received a British Empire Medal in the Queen’s 2022 New Year Honours List for mobilising her club’s response to families in need during the pandemic. “Through the Rotary network, we come together to use our skills and knowledge to support each other and build up our communities,” she says. “Nowhere was this more apparent to me than at the beginning of the pandemic when our community went into lockdown and people were isolated and shut-in. My club formed a community response team to mobilise a network of volunteers to do what we do best: support those who need help in difficult times.”

With a pool of 120 volunteers, including non-Rotary members, the club supported more than 150 households, performing more than 3,800 errands, which equated to about 6,500 volunteer hours.



Worldwide, Rotary clubs have always worked within their communities to reach out to those who feel isolated. For instance, Rotary clubs run or otherwise support dozens of Memory Cafes across the UK. They are focal points for people with early-onset dementia as well as their caregivers to meet, play games, chat, watch films and sing. Originally developed in the Netherlands in the 1990s, the concept was introduced to Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI) in 2008 by Tim Jones, a member of the Rotary Club of Wadebridge.

“At the time, I was working for the National Health Service managing mental health services in Cornwall,” Jones says. He heard about a Memory Cafe in nearby Launceston, thought he should find out more, and subsequently set up the first Rotary-run Memory Cafe in Wadebridge.

The event was so successful that Jones has since helped other Rotary clubs organise Memory Cafes in their communities. “We try to create a comfortable, failure-free environment,” says Geri Parlby, a member of the Rotary Club of Ware. She has been heavily involved in supporting a Memory Cafe in Tavistock in southwest England, and spreading the growth of these meetups. “The idea of Memory Cafes is to offer peer support. It’s a simple philosophy about leaving people with a positive experience, bringing people together to support one another.”

Now retired from the National Health Service, Jones has been conducting his own research into the benefits of Memory Cafes. Though he has not yet published his findings, he sees evidence that socialising and engaging with others creates beneficial changes in the brain. For those with memory loss, this approach aligns with the goals of cognitive stimulation therapy.

“It is about creating positive engagement which focuses on strengths



People attending a Memory Cafe in Wales celebrate Queen Elizabeth II’s platinum jubilee in June, a couple of months before she died.

rather than weakness,” Jones says. “Psychologists found that cognitive stimulation therapy and psychosocial engagement can be as effective as the medication given to people in the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease and can slow down brain deterioration.”

Jones is careful not to suggest that social engagement can stop dementia. “There is no cure for Alzheimer’s disease,” he says. “But what we can do is build resilience, which evidence shows can slow down the progress of Alzheimer’s and support people with other dementias. Memory Cafes are wonderful examples of sanctuaries to tackle loneliness, not just among people with dementia, but for their carers as well.”

Taking care of the caregivers is an often-overlooked challenge. Another consequence of the pandemic is an increase in the number of people who are caring for a partner, family member, or friend because of illness.

The London nonprofit Carers UK estimates there are now more than 10 million unpaid caregivers in the United Kingdom. They range from young adults to retirees. Since 2020, RIBI has

partnered with Carers UK to highlight the issue. Carers UK offers a telephone helpline, regular online meetups, and an online forum where caregivers can connect to provide mutual support.

Cheryle Berry, a member of the Rotary Club of Clay Cross, serves as one of the partnership leads. “Caring is often a very lonely situation, and carers can feel isolated and overwhelmed,” she says.

More than 100 Rotary club ambassadors and district leads have connected thousands of caregivers in their communities to the free services provided by Carers UK, according to Berry. “Rotarians regularly arrange online and face-to-face meetings of unpaid carers for friendship and support, including respite opportunities, Rotary friendship cafes, and activity groups across the UK,” Berry explains.

In August 2022, RIBI launched the *Rotary Million Unpaid Carers* campaign with a goal to reach one million caregivers with support and advice by the end of the 2022–23 Rotary year.

Pictures by Serena Brown

Reproduced from *Rotary*

# Motorised limb fitment camp at Mettupalayam

## Team Rotary News

In a mega two-day limb fitment camp, RC Mettupalayam Prime, RID 3203, in partnership with RC Poona Downtown and Inali Foundation, distributed motorised hands to 250 amputees including those who had artificial limbs that were dysfunctional at Nanjiah Lingammal Polytechnic College, Mettupalayam.

Unlike other limb fitment camps where prosthetics are chosen based on the size of the amputated limbs of the beneficiaries and thus facing various limitations in their usage, “the new motorised limbs operated by battery are aesthetically designed and are very flexible to enable the amputees to do a wide range of movements, quite similar to natural hands,” said Dr Aravinth

Karthikeyan, charter president, RC Mettupalayam Prime, and chairman, *Project Gift of Mobility*.

Those amputees suffering from depression after their artificial limbs not working to their expectations were happy to receive the motorised limbs which enabled them to do various functions. “The beneficiaries who also came from neighbouring states were taught how to use the newly-fitted hands effectively and the smile on their faces after feeling the wide range of movements with their new limbs gave us immense satisfaction,” said Karthikeyan.

Also, the club has arranged continued service to the beneficiaries after the camp and a helpline number is

given to them all, “so that any defective spare parts and battery will be replaced after a phone call from the amputees to Inali Foundation.”

A mobile shop owner who had lost both his arms could do all the functions now with motorised hands. “He is a happy man now as he is able to move both the limbs effectively during his work,” says Karthikeyan.

A team of volunteers of the Foundation came from Mumbai to conduct the limb fitment camp in an organised manner. Club secretary Jayaraman and other members coordinated well to make the artificial limb fitment camp a huge success. DG B Elangkumaran visited the camp and lauded the service of the club. ■



DG B Elangkumaran (centre) giving a motorised limb to a beneficiary in the presence of Gift of Mobility project chair Dr Aravinth Karthikeyan (3<sup>rd</sup> from R) and RC Mettupalayam Prime members.





**Wordsworld**

## A Tale of Two Dates



**Sandhya Rao**

Two books, different each, both significant. That's on the menu this month.

**J**anuary 26 and February 18. The first is Republic Day. And Republic Day celebrates the date on which the Constitution came into effect, back in 1950. That's the day, this year, that I started reading a book published on August 15, 2022. *The Last Heroes: Foot Soldiers of Indian Freedom* by P Sainath carries a quotation on the flyleaf from Captain Bhau (Ramchandra Sripati Lad), leader of the Toofan Sena, Kundal, Sangli, Maharashtra. Who is Captain Bhau, you might ask, and what's that he said. A freedom fighter, he passed away in 2022, at age 100. 'We fought for two things — for Freedom and Independence,' he said. 'We attained Independence.' Stop, think, and the import of his

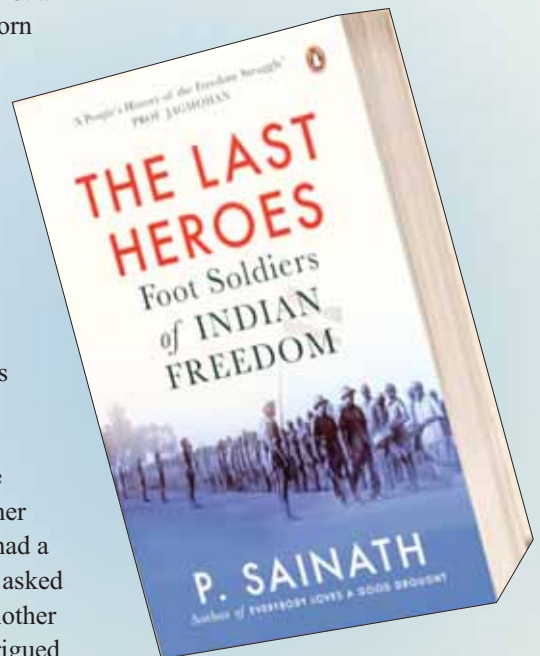
words begin to sink in. Our nation is independent, but are we the people free?

Over many years of tracking down and recording the experiences of the few remaining foot soldiers of India's freedom struggle, award-winning journalist Sainath unearths inspiring stories of women and men from across the country. They are the unsung, unknown heroes without whose commitment and bravery, independence from British rule would not have been possible. After all, there is no revolution, however nonviolent, without people. No leaders, either. Tragically, though, many of them were not only forgotten after Independence, they had to endure great hardships. Although there is a government scheme to support freedom fighters, not only is the compensation meagre, the criteria for receiving support is rigid.

Take the instance of Laxmi Indira Panda from Jeypore in Koraput, Odisha. 'Because I never went to jail, because I trained with a rifle but never fired a bullet at anyone, does that mean I am not a freedom fighter?' she asks. Born in erstwhile Burma to parents who worked laying railway lines, Laxmi, or Lakhmi, says her parents were killed in a British bombing sortie. After that she wanted to fight the British and so she joined Netaji's INA (Indian National Army) when she was in her early teens. The book features a grainy photograph of her wielding a rifle and the only reason we even hear of her is thanks to a journalist who had a young friend who sometimes asked for money to help his grandmother buy medicines and so on. Intrigued

and somewhat suspicious, the journalist did some digging and discovered that the grandmother was none other than Lakhmi who, at age 13, had been cooking in the INA's forest camps for those who went to fight. For years now, she had been working as domestic help.

You will be moved and motivated upon reading these stories collated by the People's Archive of Rural India (PARI), an online resource founded by Sainath. Interestingly, every chapter in the book ends with a QR code for the PARI Freedom Fighters Gallery. Click and you will learn more. But to return to Captain Bhau. Back in 1943, while the Bengal famine raged, he and his fellow underground revolutionaries intercepted the Pune-Miraj train carrying the salaries of those on the British payroll and commandeered it. They hauled in a princely sum of ₹19,175; it would have bought over 60,000kg of rice at the time. "It is unfair to say we looted the train,' Captain Bhau says



sharply. ‘It was money stolen by the British rulers from the Indian people that we took back.’”

Mallu Swarajyam confronted the British with a slingshot; Baji Mohammed led his group exhorting them, ‘Mareng lekin maareng nahin’ (we will die but we will not kill; Demati Dei ‘Salihan’ chased away British officers with a lathi after they had burned down and looted her village. For Gandhian HS Doreswamy, in contrast, his pen was his lathi: as the Raj came down on newspapers, ‘the Collector did not enquire why I was registering so many newspapers. ... when they shut down one title, I could re-launch another. So when they shut down *Pauravani*, I started *Pauraveera*.’ The strategies are mind-boggling, their resolve amazing. Only by reading will we know, and be reminded that we the people are seasoned with the salt of such earth and the only way to honour their memory is to enable freedom for all, from all. That’s January 26.

February 18 marks the death anniversary of arguably one of the most renowned naturalists and wildlife photographers of India, and inarguably one who best combined being a naturalist, photographer and writer. For 46 years, from 1950, the year India became a republic, to 1996 when he died, he wrote an uninterrupted

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Only by reading these stories will we know, and be reminded, that we the people are seasoned with the salt of such earth and the only way to honour their memory is to enable freedom for all, from all.

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Laxmi Indira Panda

column on natural history called ‘Country Notebook’ in *The Statesman* newspaper. M Krishnan was passionate about black and white photography, wildlife in all its manifestations, and the Tamil and English languages. The last was clearly a legacy from his father, A Madhaviah, who is credited with publishing the first realistic novel in Tamil — *Padmavathi Charithram* — in 1898. Krishnan, growing up in the still green surroundings of Mylapore in Madras, developed an affinity to the birdlife there as well as the occasional blackbuck and jackal. At 11, he had a mongoose as his pet.

A lawyer by training, he went through various jobs, a trajectory that eventually took him to a small, princely state called Sandur in what is now Karnataka. The hills, forests, fields and shrub jungles of this valley fed and nurtured his love for nature and made him who he was. Sandur was incorporated into the Indian union in 1949, upon which Krishnan returned to Madras and devoted his life to being a fulltime naturalist, writer and photographer.

Not much of his work is in print. But there is a very special, in fact, a limited edition, of a commemorative book of his photographs and writings called *Eye in the Jungle*, compiled

by Ashish and Shanthi Chandola with TNA Perumal, and published by Universities Press (India) in 2006. I had the good fortune to interview Krishnan — shortly before his demise, as it turned out. Sitting there in his sparsely furnished den, surrounded by wallets of negatives neatly labelled and stored away, black and white prints and books on nature, I was mesmerised, immersed in the stories, real stories, he shared for well over an hour. He was a masterly raconteur. I remember especially how he came face-to-face with a rampaging bull elephant and how he quickly rubbed elephant dung onto his body to throw the animal off his human scent.

The book has a detailed biographical sketch by Ramachandra Guha, a plethora of brilliant photographs, and a sensitive selection of excerpts from Krishnan’s writings. Here is a delightful passage about the southern macaque, a species of monkey, from a passage entitled ‘The Misanthropoid’: ‘When it is tired of its restless animal antics the Macaque will sit huddled on a rock, or on a lofty bough, and you will see how vexed and discontented it really is. It just sits on and on, cheerless and inconsolable, and stares moodily at the horizon. ... The sun might shine pleasantly and all things about it be bright and cheerful, but there it sits, silent and glum, brooding darkly over its hidden sorrows. Perhaps it is troubled with the first glimmerings of intellect and reason, for these things can be very vexing in their incipient states. If only it were a little more evolved — how smug and satisfied it could feel then, like so many of its betters!’ Too true!

*The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist.*



# A new girls' toilet block in Virudhunagar

V Muthukumaran

A well-executed global grant project to set up a girls' toilet block, along with other facilities, at a government-aided school in Rajapalayam, an industrial town in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu, has boosted the morale of its students and teachers. "When we celebrated Republic Day at the school, happy faces and greetings made us rejoice," says N Gopalakrishnan, from RC Rajapalayam Kings City, RID 3212, and chairman, District Stewardship Subcommittee.

Every three months, the club's grants committee will be visiting NA Annappa Raja Memorial HS School to inspect the Rotary facilities — a modern toilet block for girls, an RO plant, two interactive boards with touch screen, a Wi-Fi link, a gym; and a range of sports equipment and musical instruments — set up at a total cost of ₹48.57 lakh. The GG project was initiated during the tenure of PDG PNB Murugadoss (2020–21) "when our charter president John Selvaraj got a request from school

headmaster A Ramesh for a new sanitation block to replace the dilapidated toilet which the girls found embarrassing to use," he says.

After a meeting the grants panel had with the school's representatives, an application for the GG was made. Murugadoss released \$17,500 from the DDF and arranged \$30,000 as Directed Gift from Rtn S Maheswaran from RC Sivakasi, of which only \$15,000 was used. Donations and contributions from eight clubs of RID 3212 were

also received. The TRF guideline of one toilet for 25 girls in the new block was followed and RC Fargo Moorhead AM, RID 5580, US, was the global partner.

Tamilselvi (Class 9) says, "the new toilet block is posh and neat; and the washbasins help us clean our hands easily during lunch. Now I enjoy attending school." Headmaster Ramesh is confident of enrolling more girls with the new toilets. There are 820 boys, 630 girls in this school. "The two 65 inches interactive boards will facilitate digital education, while the sports and musical instruments will encourage them in extra-curricular activity."

Club president B Kumar Raja is happy that "we have done a GG project at a deserving school with students whose parents are mostly working in textile mills and factories." DG VR Muthu inaugurated the new facilities in the presence of PDG Murugadoss, district grant subcommittee chair A SP Arumugaselvan, school secretary NR Krishnamoorthy and AG A K Baskaran. ■

DG VR Muthu (R) at the inauguration of sports equipment.



### Emergency ambulance for Bhiwadi



Rohitashva Tomar, commissioner, Jodhpur Municipal Corporation, handing over the emergency ambulance key to Rotarians from the club.

With the help of CSR funds from Hainan Climate System, RC Bhiwadi, RID 3053, handed over an ambulance to Rotary Trust Bhiwadi for emergency medical services in the city. The project was inaugurated by Rohitashva Tomar, commissioner, Jodhpur Municipal Corporation. ■

### Public image initiative in Odisha



The Rotary Tower clock by RC Rourkela Royals.

To promote Rotary's public image in Odisha, RC Rourkela Royals, RID 3261, installed a 22ft analog clock tower in the city. Atop the tower sits a four-foot diameter clock that has inbuilt GPS technology with the Rotary logo beneath it. The clock has four faces and can be seen from all sides. ■

### Medical camp at Valsad



An eye check-up in progress.

RC Surat Tapi, RID 3060, Gopal Charitable Trust and Lok Mangalam Charitable Trust together conducted a medical camp at Jamaliya village, Valsad. Over 1,000 patients benefitted from this camp organised at a total cost of ₹2.1 lakh. The club conducts these camps once in two months. ■

### Dialysis Centre in Moodbidri



A dialysis centre being inaugurated.

RC Moodbidri, RID 3181, has installed a fully equipped three-machine dialysis centre at GV Pai Memorial Hospital, Moodbidri. The \$36,000 worth global grant was partnered by RC New Tampa Noon, RID 6890, USA. ■





inspirational, and she listened to it every day. She invited Vani to her home for lunch. At her home, Sushma asked Vani to sing the song, and got her husband and daughter — and even her dog — to listen.

Vani has been honoured and complimented by several CMs and ex-CMs of Tamil Nadu — Kamaraj, Bhaktavatsalam, Karunanidhi, MGR and Jayalalithaa.

When MGR launched AIADMK, the theme song *Vaasal engum rettai illai kolamidungal* (“draw the two leaves rangoli at every doorstep”) rendered by Vani Jayaram, became the party’s anthem.

Jayalalithaa loved Vani’s song *Engiruntho oru kural vandhadhu, adhu endha devadhaiyin kuralo* (“A voice came from somewhere, I don’t know which angel’s voice it was”) from the 1975 *Avandhan Manidhan*, a Jayalalithaa-Sivaji starrer. Music was composed by MS Viswanathan.

**V**ani Jairam was born in a musically inclined family. Her mother was a singer herself. A prodigy, the child recognised ragas even at the age of five. She was trained in Carnatic music by Kadalur Srinivasa Iyengar, TR Balasubramanian and RS Mani. She sang for All-India Radio at the age of eight.



Vani Jairam with Pandit Ravi Shankar.

She gave concerts even during her teens.

Vani excelled in school and college studies and a range of extracurricular activities — singing, dramatics, drawing, painting, cooking and embroidery. She won prizes both for academic performance and for acting and singing. However, what fascinated her was Hindi film music. “I admired the melody and the perfection in the songs of Rafi, Lata, Manna Dey, Kishore and others,” she said. She sat glued

to the radio on Wednesday evenings, absorbed in Ameen Sayani’s *Binaca Geetmala*. She dreamed of the time when she would figure in that programme.

Her mother remarked “Why this craze for film music? Wait till you get married. You can do film music if your husband approves.”

After graduating, Vani took up a job with the State Bank of India. In 1969, she got married to Jairam, a corporate executive. He was a fine sitar player, tutored by Pandit Ravi Shankar himself. He persuaded Vani to learn Hindustani music. The famous Ustad Abdul Rehman Khan of the Patiala gharana agreed to be Vani’s guru after hearing her sing.

The ustad was an exacting guru. He made Vani give up her job, and trained her not merely in Hindustani music but also in voice culture, something that helped Vani greatly in her career. She learnt the nuances of various vocal forms such as

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Former PM Indira Gandhi asked Vani: “Every artiste calls on me, why have you never done so?”

A shocked Vani responded, “I’m an ordinary citizen and you are the Prime Minister. How can I disturb you?”

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*thumri*, ghazal and bhajan from the ustad. He introduced Vani to composer Vasant Desai, who was hugely impressed by her voice and talent and signed her for a Marathi album with the legendary Kumar Gandharva, and also for his first feature film *Guddi* (1971).

Audiences loved the film, and Vani's own debut was a sensation; her voice and classical prowess won her generous laurels. The song *Bole re papihara*, now a classic, was hummed everywhere and won five awards including the prestigious Tansen Samman for classical film songs. It topped the *Binaca Geetmala* chart for 16 weeks running. "The first time it happened, I shed tears of ecstasy," she said. The haunting children's chorus song in the

film, *Hum ko man ki shakti dena*, also made it to the *Binaca* charts. It became the school prayer in many schools of North India. Vani toured widely all over Maharashtra accompanying Vasant Desai, and taught children these and other songs.

Top Bollywood composers sought Vani. One of the many notable songs that ensued was *Moajan souten ghar* from *Pakeezah* (1972) for Naushad. But the *Guddi* triumph was not replicated. Vani's next big hit in Bollywood was for the classic *Meera* (1979). Under the baton of maestro Ravishankar, she sang 12 alluring bhajans, including *Mere to giridhar Gopala*, which won her a Filmfare award for best playback singer.

## Tamil and South Indian cinema

The 1970s saw Vani's epoch-making entry into Tamil and South Indian cinema. Though P Susheela and S Janaki were well-established by then, Vani was loved by top composers, the music industry and the public because of her melodious voice, her perfect intonation, her knowledge of classical ragas, her wide range as a singer, and her sweet temperament.

On the importance of classical training, she once said, "Unless you understand the colour of a raga, you can't do justice to a song. Training in classical music enables perfection, singing without flaws."

In 1974, Vani's romantic song *Malligai en mannan* for

Vani Jairam receiving the Best Playback Singer Award for the film *Meera* from playback singer Mahendra Kapoor.



composer MS Viswanathan in *Dheerga Sumangali* echoed from every nook and corner of Tamil Nadu. Thus began a beautiful and productive partnership between Vani and the legendary MSV, who said Vani should have come to the Tamil film industry 20 years earlier. She went on to sing numerous songs in all the southern states. In fact, she was the leading singer of both Malayalam and Oriya films for 10 years.

In 1975, Vani won her first national award as best female playback singer for her two iconic songs in *Apoorva Raagangal* — *Ezhu Swarangalukkul* and *Kelviyin Nayagane*. The film was a box-office hit though released on the same day as *Sholay*; it was remarkable also because it starred both Kamal Haasan and Rajinikanth. Vani's magnificent performance in the film led to a flood of offers from top music composers. In 1977, she first sang for Ilaiyaraaja in *Bhuvana Oru Kelvi Kuri*. Two years later, she won a state government award as best female playback singer for the song *Nane nana yaro thana* composed by Ilaiyaraaja for the film *Azhage Unnai Aarathikkiren* (1979).

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Music critic Surendran Menon said that if Vani sang a 1973 song in 2023, the *sruti* would be the same. "My body has aged, not my voice," Vani herself remarked.

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**Vani Jairam recording for Guddi with music director Vasant Desai and director Hrishikesh Mukherjee.**

In 1980, the Telugu film *Sankarabharanam* (direction: K Viswanath, music direction: KV Mahadevan) took the industry by storm. The saga of a classical singer, the film offered a dozen songs based on classical ragas, rendered superbly by SP Balasubrahmanyam and Vani Jairam. Later dubbed into Tamil and Malayalam, it had as big an impact on South Indian cinema as the 1952 *Baiju Bawra* had on Hindi films. It got Vani Jairam her second national award as best female singer for the songs *Manasa sancharare* and *Dhorakuna*.

Vani sang hundreds of popular songs in films such as *Mullum Malarum* (1978), *Rosappoo Ravikaikaari* (1979), *Palaivana Solai* (1981), *Anbulla Rajinikanth* (1984), *Oru Kaidhiyin Diary* (1985) and *Punnagai Mannan* (1986). She was so busy that she sometimes recorded 20 songs a day, including a few in Bengaluru!

In 1991, Vani won her third national award as best playback singer for her spellbinding rendering of the song *Aanathi*

*neeyara* in the Telugu film *Swati Kiranam*, directed by K Viswanath, with music direction by KV Mahadevan.

In recent years, Vani was more active with private albums of devotional songs and with public concerts than with the film industry.

**Vani's Kerala connection**  
Malayalam music fans have always had a strong emotional bonding with the singer, who sang some 600 songs in Malayalam films after her 1973 debut with the solo *Sourayudhathil vidarnnoru*, a Salil Chowdhary gem for the film *Swapnam*. She worked with all leading composers to produce countless great melodies.

**C**arnatic singer Nithyasree Mahadevan said Vani Jairam's voice was mesmerizing at any pitch, any octave. Music critic Surendran Menon said that if Vani sang a 1973 song in 2023, the *sruti* would be the same. ("My





body has aged, not my voice,” Vani herself remarked.)

Composer Deva (Devanesan) said Vani could sing effortlessly in many genres. Like SPB, she would be ready in less than 15 minutes to record a song and would pick up very quickly the intricacies and nuances of a composition. Abhaswaram Ramji said Vani was the only singer who sang devotional songs in so many languages.

Vani Jairam was known for her humility (she never promoted or publicised herself) and classical roots. However, these admirable qualities were not congenial for longevity in Bollywood.



Vani Jairam with Hindi film music director Jaidev.

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Vani was sometimes asked whether the “Mangeshkar monopoly” aborted her Bombay career. She would just smile and respond that she had always been a huge Lata fan.

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Vani was sometimes asked whether the “Mangeshkar monopoly” aborted her Bombay career. She would just smile and respond that she had always been a huge Lata fan, she had grown up listening to Lata’s songs, and had sung many of them herself during her college days. There can be only one Lata Mangeshkar, she said graciously.

Actor YG Mahendra says composer MSV told him that Vani had a “blotting paper throat”! It could absorb anything immediately. YGM added: “We are lucky that Vani didn’t stay on in Bombay and returned to Tamil Nadu. It was like goddess Saraswati coming back, a boon for South Indian cinema. She never sought awards, they came to her. She had a fine sense of humour and laughed at all my jokes.”

He recalled that Vani was very agitated when her guru Vasant Desai died in a lift accident in Bombay in 1975. “No one should die like this,” she had remarked. But she herself died after an accidental fall in her own house. “She should not have died like this, she had so much more to offer the world of music,” Mahendra added.

With Lata Mangeshkar.



*The author is a senior journalist and a member of the Rotary Club of Madras South*

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S

# From RI South Asia office desk

## 2022-23 Annual Fund Challenge

Our districts/clubs/members have a special recognition opportunity for their contribution towards Annual Fund. Thanks to the RRFCs from zone 4, 5, 6 and 7 for coming up with a completely new Annual Fund Challenge this Rotary year which not only helps you in achieving your Annual Fund goal for the year but also provides you the opportunity to increase your donor base and per capita giving. For more details refer: [http://www.highroadsolution.com/file\\_uploader2/files/2022-23\\_annualfund\\_challenge.pdf](http://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/2022-23_annualfund_challenge.pdf)

**Note:** For APF Challenge this year all contributions made towards Annual Fund since July 1, 2022 will be considered.

- Donors should use their *My Rotary* login to avoid duplicate ID generation and receive timely contribution credit under their membership ID
- In the absence of *My Rotary* login, donors can also use their registered email address while making online contribution



- Do not use this channel for contributions from company/ family trust account. Instead you may send cheque/bank draft to RISAO
- To get 80G benefit under Income Tax Act, select currency as 'Indian Rupee' (INR)
- While making personal contribution, club leaders should not select the option '*This donation is from my club or its members.*'
- Option of 'Donate from members' is available to all club leaders. However 80G receipt will be generated only in the name of club leader whose *My Rotary* login has been used
- For all online contributions, 80G receipt can be generated only in the name of the individual whose *My Rotary* login has been used.

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# The soleus pushup to bring blood sugar down

**Bharat and Shalan Savur**

**P**eople diagnosed with diabetes are going to bless Professor Marc Hamilton who specialises in health and human performance at the University of Houston, Texas. He has come up with a simple exercise that is absolutely doable — the soleus pushup.

Sit on your chair with your feet flat on the floor. Then, raise the heels as high as they go while the front of the foot keeps contact with the floor. Now, lower the heels. Thus, raise and lower the heels 30 times. You can increase the reps over the weeks. And you can keep doing it all day even at your desk.

How does this exercise help? It activates the soleus muscle which is below the calf muscle. And the soleus muscle burns blood glucose and fats. Result: your fat burns, your blood sugar drops. Remember the age-old wisdom of walking after a meal? The reason for that walk is that after you eat, your blood sugar increases and the pancreas secrete insulin. This hormone escorts the glucose from the carbohydrates into the muscle where it is to be used as fuel. As the glucose enters the muscle, its level drops to a normal level in the blood — this is the natural process.

## The glucose story

To sum up, the body uses the glucose thus: directly as fuel which helps muscles move and function; some glucose is converted to glycogen to be stored in our liver and skeletal muscles to be used later; and some is converted into fatty acids to be stored as fat in our adipose tissue, simply known as body fat.

However, these natural processes are disrupted and derailed when the body resists the insulin effect. This leaves the glucose hanging in the blood which leads to pre-diabetes and, if not controlled or reversed, to Type 2 diabetes.

Years ago, my doctor told me to lose 5kg because I'd reached the pre-diabetic stage. I did. And it worked! If no lifestyle changes are made, it can cause more fat-gain leading to obesity and, later, to high blood pressure, heart disease and kidney problems.

To prevent this escalation, doctors tell us to watch our diet and walk daily. We are also advised to take a post-meal walk for 30 minutes to help the body lower its blood sugar level.

## Why walk?

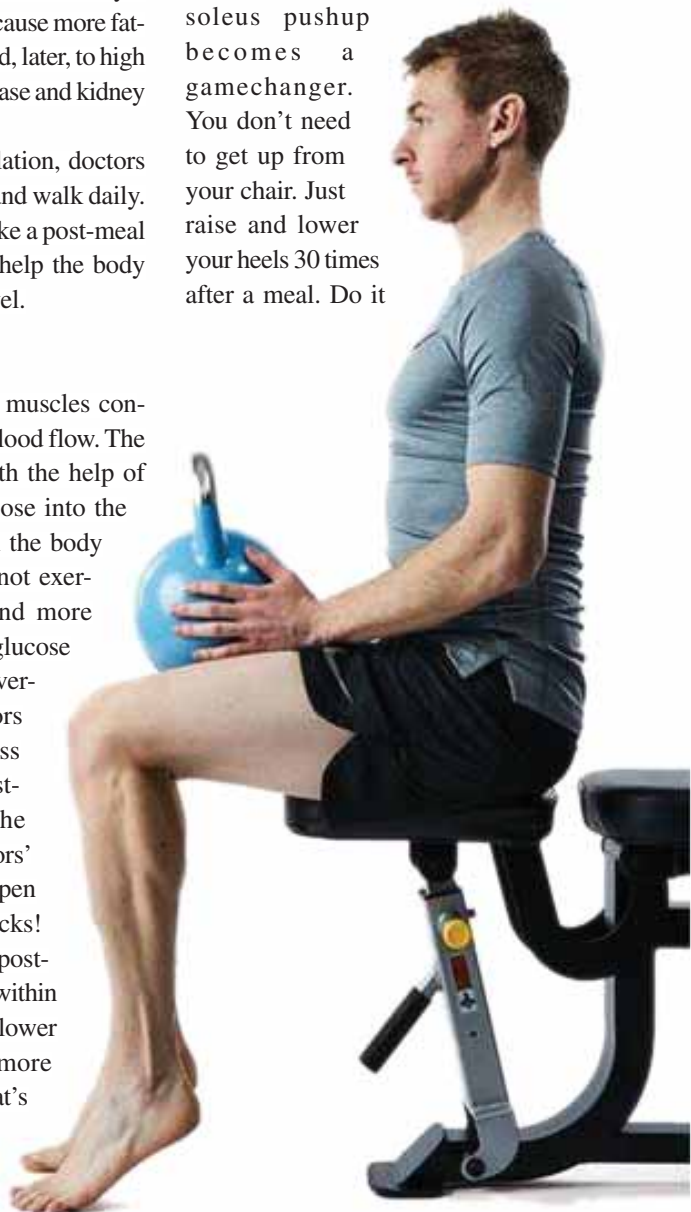
When we walk, our leg muscles contract and pressurise the blood flow. The stronger blood flow, with the help of insulin, pushes the glucose into the muscle. However, when the body gains excess fat and is not exercised, it needs more and more insulin to transport the glucose into the muscles. The over-worked glucose receptors on the muscle become less sensitive and more resistant to the efforts of the insulin. It's as if the 'doors' of the muscle refuse to open to insulin's insistent knocks!

Studies show that a post-meal walk of 30 minutes within half hour of eating can lower blood sugar 50 times more than being sedentary. That's

why we are asked to walk. Apparently, the good effects of the walk can last 24 to 48 hours depending on our constitution and the intensity of the walk.

## A health snack

Yet, not everybody feels like going for a brisk walk after a meal. And this is where Hamilton's soleus pushup becomes a gamechanger. You don't need to get up from your chair. Just raise and lower your heels 30 times after a meal. Do it



on other occasions too — while working at your desk, watching TV, while in the waiting room or lobby waiting for someone, while commuting, and any time you sit and are able to keep your feet flat on the floor. As it is healthy to keep active, fitness professionals recommend doing the soleus pushups for 270 minutes or 4.5 hours cumulative through the day. It means, even sitting gets a new dynamic dimension! Of course, you can do it while standing too. In Germany, standing soleus pushups are included in the rehabilitation programmes for heart patients. Look on it as a health snack to be crunched on every now and then during the day. Instead of your teeth, your feet do the crunching! Believe me, it feels really good. Earlier, I used to do 30 standing soleus pushups three times a week as part of my training regime. And it felt good.

### Walk or pushup?

You might wonder, how similar or different is the soleus pushup from walking? From what I've understood, these pushups show double the normal rate of metabolism in the non-eating period between meals as compared to walking. Does that mean we lose fat faster with these pushups? Here, I'd rather wait and watch as it is still a new finding and more research, computations and comparative studies need to be done over a longer span of time to be sure. For, if there's anything I've learnt in my 40 years of fitness experience, it's that biology does not always follow pure logic!

So, rather than speculate or extrapolate, don't give up walking regularly as it is a great time-tested habit. Just add on these soleus pushups as there are other important benefits in strengthening the soleus muscle: One, since it assists blood flow to the heart, the more we train it, the more enhanced will be the blood circulation. The heart gets more oxygen, more nutrients and



gets stronger. Two, the soleus muscle is specially designed by nature to continuously stabilise the body when we're standing erect, walking, running or dancing. It ensures that we don't fall forward. In short, the stronger our soleus, the greater our stability.

### Lifestyle changes

Learn to love the sound of your feet walking away from stuff that could make you gain weight or raise your blood sugar level. Some tips:

- ~ Eat moderately. Divide your plate thus — half plate vegetables, quarter carbohydrates — brown rice, whole wheat or millet, quarter protein — paneer, pulses, tofu, and one bowl of low-fat yoghurt. Millets win over wheat as they are gluten-free, have a lower glycemic index, contain fibre and, for that reason, release blood sugar slowly into the system. They also reduce inflammation in the gut. Eat fruits separately, not with meals. Pick low glycemic index ones: cherries, apples, oranges, pears, strawberries, plums, peaches; in dried fruit: apricot and dates. But don't overdose on these.

- ~ Reduce stress in your life. Do stretch exercises at any suitable time of the day and progressive relaxation of consciously relaxing each body part from toe to head at bedtime. Silence wins most times! And zone out for five minutes daily to the no-thought land!
- ~ Quit smoking. Diabetes increases risks of heart disease, eye degeneration, kidney disease, nerve damage, foot problem. Smoking further raises the risks, besides affecting breathing and stamina adversely.
- ~ Quit alcohol too. Or stick to 1 or 2 standard pegs, not more. Eat a protein like roasted channa with it. Alcohol is a carbohydrate, so another carb like potato wafers is a bad idea. Substitute alcohol with unsweetened jamun juice — it regulates our blood sugar level. And have a wholesome life, dear readers.

*The writers are authors of Fitness for Life and Simply Spiritual – You Are Naturally Divine and teachers of the Fitness for Life programme*



**F**our years ago, a survey conducted in twenty tier-1, 2, and 3 cities estimated that an average citizen in urban India travels about 1,000km a month, or roughly 35km a day. When you extrapolate from this estimate and tot up the distance travelled by a population as large as ours you have millions of kilometres logged every day. This means collectively we are responsible in a substantial way to polluting the atmosphere. Remember, vehicular emission contributes anywhere between 20–30 per cent of particulate matter (PM 2.5) and 8 per cent of total



# The road less travelled

**Preeti Mehra**

*Sustainable mobility will have to become an integral part of urban living if we want a pollution-free world.*





greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere in India.

It is because of the pollution caused by vehicle exhaust that there is so much focus on cutting down emissions and replacing petrol and diesel run cars and trucks with electric vehicles. It is true that the switchover to a fossil fuel-free world will not happen overnight but as responsible citizens we can lessen the emission load on the atmosphere through a few simple initiatives that require a little effort, perhaps an exertion on our part.

Though it may sound like a cliché, we have to take the recommendation of reducing our dependence on vehicles seriously. One of the cardinal principles to follow if you want to be part of the green movement is to walk to your destination whenever possible. Nothing could be more carbon neutral than that. The next option is the use of a bicycle, an e-bike or e-scooter. These help you in reducing your carbon footprint, besides saving fuel costs and giving you the satisfaction that you have not added to the pollution.

That walking or cycling is a very healthy alternative to driving a car is a given. Several European cities encourage people to walk or cycle to work. But unfortunately, the larger metros of our country do not have dedicated cycling tracks alongside the road network. Pavements are often so ill-maintained and narrow that you may think twice about walking to a nearby destination. In fact, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai or Bengaluru have so much hustle and bustle on their streets, with traffic moving at a fast pace and not enough discipline amongst vehicle drivers to make cycling hazardous. Even scooterists must trust their luck because of lack of traffic discipline and the penchant for those on heavier vehicles to edge them out.

While promoting the use of two wheelers and walking, the government

must also inculcate a sense of traffic discipline on the roads which respects pedestrians as well as those using greener modes of commuting like e-scooters and cycles.

Using public transport is a good option, be it the bus or the metro rail. Apart from the fact that it will reduce emissions that arise from the thousands of private automobiles that ply the roads, it is cheaper, cleaner and a great leveller. In fact, public transport has evolved over the years. We have switched from petrol and diesel vehicles to CNG some years ago. While this did help a bit, the sheer number of private vehicles outdid any gains made in clearing the air. Now there is a move to introduce e-vehicles in public transport, but this is still at a nascent stage as it will take a long time to build adequate infrastructure such as electric charging stations or a battery swapping mechanism. Besides, high costs make it a limited option in the short term.

Luckily, tier-2 and 3 cities have better infrastructure for two-wheelers and in some they have become a norm among the youngsters. However, what is needed is a mind shift among the country's urban population to switch from private to public transport, from fossil fuel to electric, from vehicles for short distances to walking or cycling.

So, what can you do as an individual to promote sustainable mobility? If you travel to work every day and are not able to use public transport, it would be best to form a carpool of like-minded colleagues, with each one taking their vehicle on different days. This way you share costs, save on parking and can make good friends as well.

One must also encourage the carpooling concept among friends and in your neighbourhood. It may not be a bad idea if you live in a colony to get all the residents together and map out the route each of them regularly takes to work. You could thus comfortably

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What is needed is a mind shift among the country's urban population to switch from private to public transport, from fossil fuel to electric, from vehicles for short distances to walking or cycling.

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fit four passengers to a car and thus reduce three additional cars adding to the congestion on the roads.

Socially conscious organisations could create carpool clubs in different neighbourhoods to encourage cutting down on vehicular emissions. Companies and offices could be persuaded to have a car-free day once a month when employees come to work on a two-wheeler (preferably a cycle or an e-scooter) or use public transport. A few years ago, commuters on the metro in Gurugram were pleasantly surprised to spot the CEO and senior management staff of a telecom company in their midst. They were heading to work on a car-free day.

Initiatives such as these need to be popularised and promoted. So too must efforts to improve last mile connectivity between metro stations and industrial and commercial complexes. This would encourage more people to commute by metros rather than drive to work.

Finally, we must make green commuting a popular and positive activity. That will go a long way in decongesting our roads and help us breathe easy.

*The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues*



## RC Pattukkottai Kings — RID 2981



A mega veterinary camp was organised at Rajamadam village with the owners of livestock getting their cattle examined. Medications were given.

## RC Kundli — RID 3012

Bicycles were presented to 42 girl students on Children's Day. RC Dwarka charter president MP Garg and spouse Susmita were the chief guests.



## RC Madurai Presidency — RID 3000



Books from various genres were donated to the Madurai Central Jail Library for prisoners to read and get benefitted.

## RC Nagpur Metro — RID 3030

360 people benefitted from an eye-ortho check-up camp at Khargaon village. Around 170 spectacles were distributed and 60 patients chosen for cataract surgery.



## RC Delhi South — RID 3011



An ambulance-cum-mobile clinic, *Serve Vahan*, was donated to Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani International Centre. It was sponsored by Rtn Rajeev Bajaj and spouse Sonia.

## RC Surat East — RID 3060

Around 650 blankets were distributed to sugarcane labourers to protect them from wintery nights.



## RC Phagwara Midtown — RID 3070



Sewing machines were donated to five women in the presence of IPDG Upinder Singh Ghai, club president Raj Kumar Heer and other members.

## RC Kanpur Green — RID 3110



The club is sponsoring the school fees of underprivileged girl students following a request from Kanpur MP Satyadev Pachauri.

## RC Patiala Greater — RID 3090



PDG Dr Harbans Pathak and spouse Rtn Sudha sponsored lunch for 465 students of a deaf and dumb school run by the club to mark their wedding anniversary.

## RC Kushinagar — RID 3120



Insurance cover of ₹2 lakh was provided to 179 rickshaw drivers, fish cart pullers and rag-pickers under the PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana at an event in Kasia.

## RC Muzaffarnagar Vishal — RID 3100



Around 550 students took part in a drawing competition at SD Inter College. Apart from top three prizes, 25 children were honoured with mementos, certificates.

## RC Talegaon Dabhade — RID 3131



Around 5,000 offspring of indigenous fish varieties were introduced into a lake as part of its restoration. Over 40,000 such offspring will be added to the lake in the next 18 months.



## RC Ambajogai City — RID 3132



Dining tables were donated to the Gyansagar Karnabadhir Vidyalaya, a school for the deaf, for students to partake food comfortably on the premises.

## RC Hubli East — RID 3170



Around 80 people benefitted from a bone density check-up camp at the Rotary School, Bengeri village. Dr Vinod Makannavar from KIMS Hospital gave consultations and medicines.

## RC Mumbai Parleshwar — RID 3141



Protein supplements were distributed to 500 TB patients at the launch of *Project Prosper* at three health centres at the East ward of the Greater Mumbai Corporation.

## RC Kota City — RID 3182



Around 140 patients were screened at an eye-cum-cataract surgery camp held in memory of late Rtn Pradeep Shetty. 43 patients underwent cataract surgery.

## RC Dombivli West — RID 3142



A cheque for ₹4.2 lakh was handed over to the Jupiter Life-line Hospitals to carry out paediatric heart surgeries. The amount was raised through a fundraiser drama.

## RC Bangalore Udyog — RID 3190



Over 5,000 government school students attended a three-day personality development programme held with the support of Roots Education. It aims at overcoming exam fear and stress.

## RC Coimbatore East — RID 3201



Pongal gifts were given to 50 visually-impaired and 50 differently-abled families at the National Federation for Blind. The event was organised with the help of three more clubs.

## RC Chennai Port City — RID 3232



More than 100 people were screened at two eye camps held with the support of Radhatri Nethralaya. A special artificial intelligence camera was used to screen patients.

## RC Karamadai — RID 3203



Black-topped roads were laid at the Government Hospital, Mettupalayam, at a cost of ₹5.2 lakh. The project was sponsored by Rtn Gnanasekaran.

## RC Jamshedpur Mid Town — RID 3250



A library was set up at the Sidhu Kanu Shiksha Niketan in memory of charter president Raj Narayan Singh. His wife Asha inaugurated the library on his first death anniversary.

## RC Alleppey East — RID 3211



Club president Gopal Gireesan donated wheelchairs to the disabled as part of its outreach initiatives for the disadvantaged people in society.

## RC Belur — RID 3291



12 wheelchairs were donated to disabled with sponsorship from the KSB Charitable Trust. PDG Ravi Sehgal assured support to the club.

Compiled by V Muthukumar



# Woes of truncated winters

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



Winter in North India, where I have been living since 1958, is becoming shorter by the year. It's gone from being for 90 days to just half that. Until the mid-90s, it used to start just after Diwali in mid-November and stretch till the first week of March when the minimum temperature could be as low as 15 degrees Celsius. But now, as I write this in the first week of February, the minimum temperature is already around 12. The maximum is steadily increasing and tends to be 22–24. This was also the temperature in the third week of December, which means the really cold weather has lasted for just about 45 days when temperatures stay in the 3–15 range. This is good news for old people and those who don't have a roof over their heads. But, in spite of being nearly 72 years old, I can't help feeling sad at the truncated winter.

The affluent young, as they always have, really look forward to the cold weather. After all, this is the only time they can dress in fine western clothes like woollen suits, heavy parkhas, colourful windcheaters, long mufflers and even pink socks. Not just that. There is also no need to bathe every day. Just washing the face and feet is enough. And if you wear clean socks everyday, even that is not required. Some people don't even do that and wear dirty socks. Sometimes you happen to get one of them as your taxi driver. With the heater on at full and the windows

up, it can be very distressing. Thank god, though, that the old heavy blankets which taxi drivers earlier used, have given way to fluffy Chinese nylon jackets. They don't stink.

The short winter is also accompanied now by really dirty smog. It's truly filthy and you can't breathe properly. This smog stretches from Peshawar and Lahore to Agra and Lucknow. The slight downward curvature in the earth in this area, which is like a saucer, ensures enhanced inversion wherein the cold air above doesn't permit the dirty hot air below to escape. Result: the cold weather is short but the pollution, of gigantic proportions, is long. The good bit has gone and the bad bit has replaced it. Old or young, eyes burn all the time and you feel

miserable. And it's only going to get worse as the number of cars goes on increasing.

It wasn't just the clothes that made winter so enjoyable. It was the food, too, sold by the wayside on carts — most notably the bun omelette and boiled eggs and the aaloo parathas and carrot halwa and moong dal halwa. During college days and bachelorhood, they were staple food for all of us, men and women. We would eat three or four boiled eggs and then two plates of the halwa. And drink some hot, sweet tea. It's all nearly gone now.

The short winter also means there is no or very little winter rain now. It used to rain in early and end-December and around 26 January. Not anymore. So the old cold fog which was heavy, white and clean, has given way to light, brown and dirty fog.

Winter also allowed boys, girls, men and women to be indistinguishable from each other because of the heavy clothes. This had its own special advantages, as you can imagine. Once a friend of mine and his girlfriend were hugging on a park bench and an overly zealous policeman came and whacked the girl on the head thinking she was the male. He went by the hair on their heads because men had long hair those days. He was genuinely contrite when the female yelped and started crying. But now thanks to the extraordinary pollution no one sits on park benches anymore. The climate for love, too, has changed. ■

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# In Brief



## India's first 3D-printed home

Chennai-based TVASTA Manufacturing Solutions has

built India's first 3D-printed home conceptualised by IIT-Madras alumni. The single storey house built on 600 sqft area has one bedroom, hall and kitchen. Developed in association with Habitat for Humanity's Terwilliger Centre for Innovation in Shelter, it was constructed using concrete 3D printing technology.



## Largest wearable cake dress

A baker from Switzerland, Natasha Coline Kima Fah Lee Fokas, has created a new Guinness World Record for the largest

wearable cake dress (supported). She baked and wore a dress made of cake weighing 131.5kg for the record. The dress had a circumference of 4.15m, a height of 1.57m and a diameter of 1.319m.

## Pilot draws India Map in the sky



Gaurav Taneja, a YouTuber, pilot, and fitness enthusiast, created the India map in the sky using the Global Positioning

System (GPS) on Republic Day. The three-hour flight was part of the *Aasman Mein Bharat* mission to create a 350-km GPS art map of India in the sky.



## \$25 million for plastic pollution clean-up

Joe Gebbia, co-founder of Airbnb and Samara, has donated \$25 million to support the Dutch non-profit The Ocean Cleanup. The non-

profit's pilot-scale ocean cleaning system, named *System 002*, has been deployed in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch since 2021 and has so far removed close to 200,000kg of plastic.



## Barbie honours the first black woman pilot

Bessie Coleman, who became the first Black person to earn an international pilot's licence in 1920 by flying to France to get the licence because there were no pilot training opportunities for Black women in the US at the time, has become the latest hero to be honoured in the Barbie doll series featuring 'Inspiring Women'. The 'Brave Bessie' doll dons a traditional olive-green aviator suit, including a cap with her initials BC.

Compiled by Kiran Zehra; Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



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